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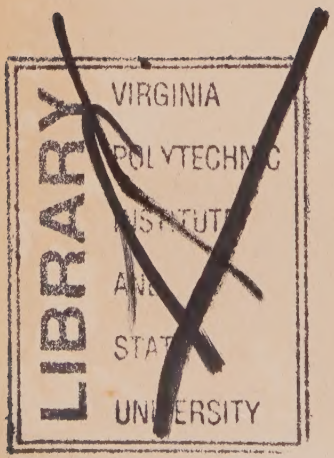
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MAX BEERBOHM IN PERSPECTIVE

Works by Max Beerbohm

THE WORKS OF MAX BEERBOHM
MORE
YET AGAIN
AND EVEN NOW

A CHRISTMAS GARLAND

THE HAPPY HYPOCRITE
ZULEIKA DOBSON
SEVEN MEN

CARICATURES OF TWENTY-FIVE GENTLEMEN
THE POET'S CORNER
THE SECOND CHILDHOOD OF JOHN BULL
A BOOK OF CARICATURES
FIFTY CARICATURES
A SURVEY

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MAX MINIMUS

MAX BEERBOHM IN PERSPECTIVE

BY

BOHUN LYNCH

WITH A PREFATORY LETTER BY M. B.

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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PREFACE

Egged on by people who know as well as I do that such wine needs no bush that I can hang, but who were good enough to believe that a book of this nature might be found excusable, I began my research and made a full confession to Mr. Beerbohm. I suggested that he might lend me a page of his corrected MS. to reproduce in facsimile. (To show readers how an author goes to work may not be strictly relevant to an appreciation of that work's result, to be sure, but it is legitimately interesting.) I urged that, probably, there were in his possession caricatures as yet unpublished and unexhibited which might be published here; finally—and how well he must have known that this was coming—I asked him whether he would make a caricature of himself, special to the occasion, for a frontispiece.

This was his reply:—

Villino Chiaro, Rapallo.
June 18, 1921.

Dear Bohun Lynch,—*The sky is very blue here this morning, as indeed it usually is, and your letter came like a bolt from it. After I had read the first* 2 *or* 3 *lines I instinctively sat down, somewhat blasted. I then read the whole letter manfully. And now I take up my pen. But I don't (it is a sign of the condition to which you've*

reduced me) *know what to do with it. I don't quite know what to write. You are a much younger man than I am, and I think you might have waited for my demise—instead of merely hastening it. Had you said you thought of writing a little book about me, I should have said simply "Don't!" But as you give me to understand that you* intend *to write a little book about me and have already been excogitating it, what shall I say? I know, at any rate, what I shan't say. I shan't say "Do!"*

I shan't offer you the slightest assistance—except of the purely negative and cautionary kind that now occurs to me. I won't supply you with any photograph of myself at any *age, nor with any scrap of corrected MS., nor with any caricature of myself for a frontispiece* (*you yourself have done several brilliant caricatures of me, and I commend these to your notice*), *nor with* any *of the things you seem to think might be of interest. You must forage around for yourself. I won't even try to prevent you from using anything you may find. I eschew all responsibility whatsoever. I disclaim the horrid privilege of seeing proof-sheets. I won't read a single word till your book is published. Even if modesty didn't prevent me, worldly wisdom would. I remember several books about men who, not yet dead, had blandly aided and abetted the author; and I remember what awful asses those men seemed to me thereby to have made of themselves. Two of them were rather great men. They could afford to make awful asses of themselves. I, who am* 100 *miles away from being great, cannot afford such luxuries. My gifts are small. I've used them very well and discreetly, never straining them; and the result is that I've made a*

charming little reputation. But that reputation is a frail plant. Don't over-attend to it, gardener Lynch! Don't drench and deluge it! The contents of a quite small *watering-can will be quite enough. This I take to be superfluous counsel. I find much reassurance and comfort in your phrase, "a* little *book". Oh, keep it little! —in due proportion to its theme. Avoid such phrases as "It was at or about this time that the young Beerbohm" etc. My life (though to me it has been, and is, extremely interesting) is without a single point of general interest. Address yourself to my writings and drawings. And* surtout pas de zèle, *even here! Be judicial. Make those reservations without which praise carries no weight. Don't, by dithyrambs, hasten the reaction of critics against me. Years ago, G. B. S., in a light-hearted moment, called me "the incomparable". Note that I am* not *incomparable. Compare me. Compare me as essayist (for instance) with other essayists. Point out how much less human I am than Lamb, how much less intellectual than Hazlitt, and what an ignoramus beside Belloc; and how Chesterton's high spirits and abundance shame me; how unbalanced G. S. Street must think me, and how coarse too; and how much lighter E. V. Lucas' touch is than mine; and so on, and so forth. Apply the comparative method to me also as caricaturist. Tend rather to* underrate *me—so that those who don't care for my work shall not be incensed, and those who do shall rally round me . . . But I seem to be becoming guilty of just what I swore to avoid: I'm offering "positive" advice—and at such a length! Still, the advice is good; and the letter, tho' it will bore you in the reading, will save you trouble some day.*

PREFACE

Some day, if your future novels are as beautifully-done as your past ones (and if our civilization persists), you'll get a letter from a young man announcing that he is going to write a book about you ; *and then you will but have to post him this very screed, writing across it in blue pencil* " *Certainly, but please follow advice herein given* " *by your long-winded friend*

MAX BEERBOHM.

Well, I must be as obedient as possible. I will forage around for myself. I must accept the responsibility all of which, whatsoever, he eschews. I will not send proof-sheets to Mr. Beerbohm. His rejection in writing of my proposal in regard to a page of corrected MS. will remind readers of the celebrity whose stock reply to requests from autograph-hunters for his signature was a (signed) refusal to supply it. But to reproduce his letter would be, perhaps, to take a mean advantage. So, the MS. of his actual work, however legitimately interesting, must be taken on trust. (I can assure the reader that all of it is exquisitely neat, legible, in bulk beautiful, but that all corrections are blotted out by black impenetrable lakes of ink, so that no one shall ever know whether his second thoughts are really better than were his first.)

Fortunately I do not need to be supplied by him with photographs. I will make it as little a book as possible ; maintaining, however, my own convictions about the " due proportion to its theme." As to Mr. Beerbohm's life, I had, in my letter, already assured him that his views and mine would not violently clash. I gave him

the instance of a mutual friend, an actor, whose sentiments and mine were identical in this regard, who was once "interviewed" for a newspaper whose representative put to him some extraordinarily impertinent questions. This victim of what the public is supposed to want had said: "If you wish to know anything about my work, what I've done on the stage and so on, I'll tell you: but if it's anything to do with my private life . . . oh!—that *is* it, is it? I see. Very well. My mother?—she takes in washing. Some years ago she moved to Notting Dale so as to be nice and handy to the Scrubs when Father came out. My sisters . . ."

Actually, of course, Mr. Beerbohm is wrong in this respect. There are many experiences and contacts in his life which would be of general interest; but that interest must for the most part remain, and very properly remain, in the subjunctive mood.

As to comparisons—I rebel. What Mr. Shaw said in two words, I want to try and say in a great many. And to compare Mr. Beerbohm's work with that of dead writers and of living would be (odiousness apart) extremely unprofitable. Of the various items in his last book Mr. Gosse wrote: "They are winged things which seem too aery in their hovering flight to be called essays, like those of Addison, of Hazlitt, or of Mr. Lucas. They are the humming-birds of literature."

It will be noticed, moreover, that even Mr. Beerbohm himself, so prolific in examples where other writers are concerned, was forced to content himself with a general request for comparison in respect of his caricatures.

But I will try to make reservations. I will rise early

in the morning, after a late night, and, before breakfast, allow my examination of Mr. Beerbohm's work to be coloured by morosity and petulance.

"You may call it monstrous," he said of critics in his essay on Ouida, "that a good writer should be at the mercy of such persons, but I doubt whether the good writer is himself aggrieved. He needs no mercy. And, as a matter of fact, the menaces hurled by the ordinary reviewers, whenever something new or strange confronts them, are very vain words indeed, and may at any moment be merged in clumsy compliments."

And there—as he might represent Henry James as saying—you, so very emphatically, are!

As to the fact that I am a much younger man—Ah, how our view of Time alters as Time goes by! In one of his first essays the exact number of my years was branded by Mr. Beerbohm as the "brink of middle age." He was quite wrong then. Would it be ungenerous of me to say that, by implication, he is quite right now?

For the sake of convenience I have tried to describe the caricatures and cartoons as though they were different things from the writings and not, as shall hereinafter be explained, the same thing. Of course, a certain amount of overlapping is, owing to this curious fact, inevitable; but, formally speaking, the discussion will fall into two parts, and the sheep be divided from the—sheep.

So to Max Beerbohm, for not trying to prevent me from using what I have found, as well as for his " negative and cautionary help " I owe my warmest thanks ; which, especially in regard to the illustrations, are due also to Mrs. Charles Hunter and (alphabetically) after her to George Bealby, Austin Earl, Philip Guedalla, Messrs. Heinemann, John Lane, William Nicholson, Richard Pryce, Professor Rothenstein, Walter Sickert, J. C. Squire (who approved of the suggestion that I should write an article in the *London Mercury*, which is the basis of my survey here), G. S. Street, the Proprietors of *Vanity Fair*, Frederick Watson, and—I had nearly added " Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all," offering, however, no disrespect to his companions.

B. L.

London,
July, 1921.

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PART I

PART I

THE WRITINGS OF MAX BEERBOHM

I

QUITE a good subject for a literary competition, or a "Confession" Book would be the discussion (in a strictly limited number of words) of the circumstances in which we came to read certain authors. Everybody concerned in the production of books has been and will continue to be puzzled about it. Was it a review or an advertisement? Or was it just chatter at tea-parties? Or was it the subconscious working of all of these?

In some cases such a discussion would be a severe test of memory, in perhaps more it would be a severer test of honesty. What was it that actually impelled us to read Henry James? What finally drove in upon us the sheer necessity of doing so? Was it the fear of having to say again and over again:—"Well—no—now—do you know?—you'll think it perfectly dreadful of me—it's an awful confession to make, but—there it is! —I've never read *The Turn of the Screw*. I know that I must, and I really will, and since *you* say so, I'll begin to-night." And then at last, perhaps, you do: not exactly because you want to, but because you are

utterly tired of the really arduous task of talking about books you have never read, a task made far more arduous when one party to the discussion happens to be the author.

"Of course, my dear," your hostess will say to him, but looking at you, "of course, I know what *you* feel about this last book, but—you'll think it very stupid of me—I must say I still like *Dashblank* the best." And then you are dreadfully aware that she is not only looking at but speaking to you. "Don't you agree?"

Think! You get no comfort from your conviction that the lady herself has read no other book than *Dashblank* by that author. You fear the crooked as well as the straight road. You are afraid, on the one hand, of almost inevitable complications; on the other—not so much of wounding inevitable susceptibilities—but of losing the dignified position in the conversation to which your kind hostess has appointed you.

Sometimes, when you have lied, the author himself will look at you with a kind of precise determination, when it is too late to go back, and you will know that he doesn't mind a bit whether you have read his book or not, but that unless the earth opens and swallows you, as you hope it will, you will be caught in a trap that *he* has laid for you.

How did I come to read Stevenson? I think my honour and my memory are here comfortably parallel. When I was a very small boy I overheard the late Dr. Ridding, then Bishop of Southwell, speaking with rasping contempt of a comparatively new story called *Treasure Island*. "Bah!" he said (or at any rate he

uttered something of that intention), "a boy's book —all very well for boys."

Now *Treasure Island* had been given to me some time before and I had not yet read it. I suppose I felt even then that the criticism (the first literary criticism I remember hearing) was irrelevant, and it was clear that the late headmaster of Winchester's dual implication was unfair. He despised not only the book, but boys. So, following the course of normal perversity, I was launched upon a career of (no doubt) frivolous reading, which in Stevenson's case has been repeated almost year by year ever since.

Again, how many people (though not you, Reader, nor I) begin to read an author because that author is, for the moment, the correct thing? It is like the purchase of old furniture: a large number of persons buy it, not because they especially like it, but because Queen Anne walnut-wood—or whatever the particular period may be—is fashionable. Certain authors are fashionable too, and are read (or skipped) for their extrinsic merits. But that—the original impulse—hardly matters at all, provided that the reading (or the collecting), which started from so ignoble a source, develops later, as in either case it often does, into a reasoned and judicious appreciation.

It is, then, interesting or heartrending, as the case may be, to remember how we came to read what now gives us so keen an enjoyment: but the great thing is that we did make a beginning, and are now, deservedly or not, reaping a harvest rich with abiding joy.

And how did we come to read Max Beerbohm? In

the days when he was not widely known, did we read his essays because we had seen his caricatures, or did our delight in his written wit send us in wondering haste to find its complement in pictorial satire ?

Like many others of my generation I began reading Mr. Beerbohm's work at Oxford, which (together with "The Other Place") provides exactly the right setting and atmosphere for such an initiation. Undergraduates at Oxford like to read about Oxford—at all events they did then—and we had heard that Mr. Beerbohm had made intimate references to the place both in the *Works*, and in *More*, then recently published. Further, he had not at that time taken his standing in the mythology of Oxford, but was a living memory. Quite young dons had been his contemporaries, and those who had known him were seen by some of us to be invested with a certain lustre and were accordingly sought after. Even then, in the first year or two of the twentieth century, there was a good deal of excited speculation about the personality of Max Beerbohm, less, it should be admitted, for his own sake, than for the curious fact that he was a part—a quite definite and assured part—of that period, that condition of being, that mode of literature and of art, that attitude to life, which we call for short "the 'nineties." The eighteen-nineties, the late Victorian renaissance, from which we had so recently emerged, had been unmistakably impressed by that personality : though the worship in Oxford of those days dedicated to this particular hero was not a tithe of what it is now, when, as I am told, a Max Society has been proposed and by

the time these words are printed will probably have been inaugurated.

We who had spent most of the decade between 1890 and 1900 at school then found ourselves separated from it by a gulf more formidable than that which divides us now. For that gulf was fixed also between our boyhood and our manhood; and, speaking for my friends and myself, we only discovered the 'nineties, like unfortunate poets, after their demise. We had been good boys and bad boys, but we had not been, as it happened, literary boys: so that when at Oxford we made that discovery we were much more excited and delighted than were the editors of and contributors to school magazines who were already familiar with the drawings for *Salomé*, and for whom "the avid poison of a subtle kiss" was as stale as were, for us, last year's batting averages.

Having made our discovery—those of us, that is, who abandoned goodness or badness for "literariness," we ravenously devoured the 'nineties, and our enjoyment of the new food was audible by our immediate neighbours. But, at first, our pleasure in the literature of and the literature about the previous decade was rather furtive. We had been taught very carefully and well that excellence in games and godliness were practically synonymous, and having in the not distant past been caned by prefects for shirking the lingering torture of a cold shower-bath in winter we felt that anything outside "Nature" which was called beautiful was probably unwholesome. I, at any rate, experienced a slight sense of guilt as I rummaged amongst

the second-hand bookshelves. We had heard that books written in the 'nineties were "daring" and we scrutinised them from the "moral" or, at all events, the hygienic point of view—which is much the same whether you are on the side of or the side against the angels. And, despite our recent education in Gaza, Askalon, and Gath we were on the *qui vive* for any books or pictures which would lead us off the track beaten from those starting-points.

And I suppose also that we found with some surprise and relief that all our little private and personal rebellions against authority had their counterparts in the minds of quite grown up and clever people, and that the discipline from which we were just free and which still irked us in retrospect, had likewise irked, though in a larger sense, a considerable body of our just-elders.

Not every generation has this privilege in quite so emphatic a shape: for there really was rather a stir in the 'nineties, though no doubt too much fuss has since been made of it. Was it definitely an age of innovations, or was it merely an age when hucksters cried fresh fish so loudly that they were believed? It hardly matters. The important thing about the 'nineties, so far as we are presently concerned, is that Max Beerbohm arose in them. So his early essays were very refreshing if only because no question of "morality" entered into them. They could be enjoyed, as literature of the 'nineties, but with a single heart, unoppressed by guilt.

For my own part there were other reasons why I

should read Mr. Beerbohm. I had not met him, but the best and oldest friend I had told me that she had spun his tops for him when he was a very little boy, and, later, gave me the photograph which appears as a frontispiece to this book, and which is extremely like him as he is now over forty years afterwards. Moreover, my curiosity was piqued by a young woman, who had been expensively taught and might be going to be a professional pianist, who had met Mr. Beerbohm and told me that he was " very eccentric." In passing, I may add that she never did become a professional pianist, but that many years later her view of the subject of this essay remained unshaken. Conversation had turned (or been twisted) in that direction, and " He's very eccentric, is he not ? " she asked me.

So my reasons for reading Max Beerbohm's books were—one part, the glamour of the 'nineties and one part, personal, though second-hand, knowledge. And having read the little there was then to read, I turned to the caricatures, and awaited and have since awaited, from that day to this, with an ever-growing eagerness, fresh experiences of both.

For the caricatures and the writings are not manifestations of two arts, but of one. There are a number of proverbs, which may or may not be generally true, about shoe-makers sticking to their lasts and Jacks-of-all-trades being masters of none. But these do not apply to Max Beerbohm who has but one trade. He is a satirist : so that it is less odd than at first glance it might appear that he should have succeeded equally well both as author and as artist. Other writers have

been known to play with pencil and with paint-box: some of them have become quite distinguished amateurs of the game. And some painters have used a pen, as did Whistler, with such effect as to inspire Max Beerbohm to write an essay about his writing.* But in each case the alternative task has been no more than a hobby, or a pleasant change of occupation. It seldom happens that the dual impulse is found in one man. The explanation in Mr. Beerbohm's case is merely that the impulse is not dual, but single. His two means lead him to the same end. There is hardly a turn of thought in his writings which does not find its counterpart in his caricatures. To and fro we may go from one to the other, backwards and forwards and back again, and we find each time the same wit, the same sense of what is ludicrous, the same intelligence behind the sense.

It is one of the curses of modern criticism that so much artistic work of all denominations is admired or derided, praised or condemned, according to and inseparably from the date of its production. Or, more politely, it is an error of convenience. Real excellence in art knows no period. In speaking of outstanding, old and portentous art we do not make this mistake. We do not say that Giotto was "rather wonderful for the fourteenth century," though, in a different dimension, we have been heard to find in the "coarseness" of the sixteenth century an excuse for the "coarseness" of its poets. We might, with far more reason, judge personal conduct by period. "There are fashions in

* *Whistler's Writing* (*Yet Again*).

humour, and they are always changing," Mr. Beerbohm writes in, at the time of writing this, his most recent essay.* "Wit, on the other hand, being a hard and clean-cut thing, is always as good as new." And great art has been always and always will be great. The 'nineties certainly brought forth much original work: that is to say, men and women, for reasons which it would be tedious to enter into at length, dared rather extensively to be themselves. It was fashionable to be daring. But that, in the 'nineties, which immediately afterwards and even now to some extent, was and is most remarked, was the accessory affectation rather than the solid originality. Though he tells us in *Be it Cosiness* † that he belonged to the Beardsley period, we know now that Mr. Beerbohm was talking nonsense. When he says, in a parody of his own manner ‡—"I belong to the Beerbohm period," he is much nearer the mark.

Originality hand in hand with affectation has been, indeed, characteristic of all periods. There is nothing new . . . but what in usual language we call original things are constantly being said or thought, only, in the 'nineties, the real excellence of the idea was made palatable by extravagance of ornament.

Of course, during that decade there was, so to put it, much ornamental shadow without substance. There was, however, probably no more affectation in art than

* T. Fenning Dodworth, *The London Mercury*, August, 1921.

† First published in *The Pageant*, 1896. Reprinted in the *Works* under the title of *Diminuendo*.

‡ *Saturday Review*, Christmas Supplement, 1896.

there is now. In some writers of the 'nineties, as in Max Beerbohm himself, the affectation was only one skin deep. In some there was little else. " Even his lungs are affected," one poet said of another in those days. Youth's harmless little affectations of superiority, though they often exasperate people already provoked by finding themselves out of touch with the rising generation, are just as amusing as in elder people is the affectation of innocence.

" In my youth," writes Mr. Beerbohm in his maturity, " the suburbs were rather looked down on—I never quite knew why."

It was in that youth that he once travelled with some friends by train to Croydon to see a play which was being produced by Mr. Gordon Craig. Suddenly, to the consternation of the good burgesses who, with baskets of fish upon the rack, were returning from their day's work in the City, he pulled down the blinds. Somebody asked him why he did so.

" S-sh ! " he said in a loud whisper. " Lest I should see the Crystal Palace."

All the same, looking back, it was a good age and people who began to write then are rather to be envied. The Old Order was still firmly maintained, people were still fairly satisfied with themselves and one another. It would have been nice to have been grown-up then. For perhaps everything did seem to be very new. In his book *The Eighteen-Nineties*, Mr. Holbrook Jackson joins the great majority of critics in acclaiming the newness of all things made during that time. To Mr. Beerbohm he allots the " New Urbanity." Reference

A Self-caricature.
By Max (C. 1893).

to any newspaper or periodical of the 'nineties and especially to *Punch* (which I once heard described as the light reading of the upper-married classes), will show the same thing: "new women," new this, new the other. But further reference to *Punch*, and the conversation of most elderly persons and even young ones who are *laudatores temporis acti*, will reveal the same inclination to-day—to be ingenuously surprised at the novelty of everything except the moon and, in the latter cases, to imply something detrimental in that novelty. No doubt Mr. Beerbohm was new, in the same degree (but less in essentials) that Aubrey Beardsley was new. But the best of him, the bone of him was not "new." Not that there is anything extraordinarily vile in mere novelty, but if it is untrue to say that all novelty is bad, we might still assert with some show of reason that all excellence is old.

Mr. Jackson admirably tells us that the personality and art of Max Beerbohm was fine "because it was at once normal and unique, sane but inconsequent, sedate without being serious, and mannered without empty severity or formality." All of which was true of Mr. Beerbohm's earlier work, and remains true, though a reservation must now be made about the seriousness.

The really distinctive and important fact about Mr. Beerbohm—and this applies to his early as to his later work—is that he is one of the very few (and now much fewer than in times past), who find it more blessed to give than to receive, and who act upon that unusual discovery.

"The riches of the world," writes Professor Rothen-

stein in his Preface to *Twenty-four Portraits* (one of which is a beautiful drawing of Max Beerbohm), " the riches of the world do not all lie in mines or oil-fields, nor yet in the safes of banks, of companies and of trade unions. Much of our wealth is supplied by men of vision who must often, lest they be prevented from giving their best, deposit their gold under men's pillows in the night-time.

" The publication of these drawings is intended as an act of homage to those who give rather than take."

In this age of progress and of push and of " expansion of trade," when we are at last and at large beginning to understand how genuine a social curse has been, these last hundred years, not only the greed of but the admiration for Money, it behoves us, whose pleasures are quiet, to thank as simply and directly as possible that comparatively obscure minority the fine fruit of whose minds is the cause of so much of that quiet pleasure.

II

Of greater moment than the circumstances in which we came to read Max Beerbohm are the circumstances in which he came to make that pleasure possible.

A good many quite competent authors write because they have an inclination that way. They think of a good story, or an amusing or instructive theme for an essay and down they sit and write it all out, with greater or less pains and difficulty as the case may be. Other authors, often much less " readable " than those whom I have described as quite competent, write because they must. This is a point which, for all the ten thousand times it has been indignantly repeated, is not understood by the general public of whom, reader, (to borrow Mr. Beerbohm's pen * for a moment) you are no more a member than I am—and which still thinks that writing is not real work at all unless it be devoted to some practical or beneficent end, such as text books on oil-engines or treatises about rheumatism: also, that writers need not really have been writers, but might just as well (and much more profitably) have been accountants—in which opinion the public is often juster than it knows. However, many authors are quite contented with the public on this score, because it gives them a feeling of superiority.

* *The Humour of the Public (Yet Again).*

It remains true, nevertheless, that people who really have something to say simply must say it, and they are (though the word must be used more sparingly than heretofore) artists. They write (or paint, or compose) when the fit takes them: that is, when the need to do so comes from inside them. The difference between them and the "quite competent," uninspired authors is simple, for these are urged by external forces. Their beginnings are virtually in this manner:—"By Jove, I've got a bright idea! I'll be a writer!"

To Mr. Beerbohm and others of his measure the approach was somewhat different. His half-brother, Sir Herbert Tree, once asked him what he was going to do,* and he told him—not probably in the formula given above—a barrister.

"Ah . . . The Bar . . ." Sir Herbert replied. "You at the Bar . . . I should have thought you'd better be a—a sort of writer, and then, perhaps," he added, "drift into Diplomacy."

Whether the much-younger brother had at that time shown any obvious and special talent I don't know, but it is true that he was fairly—not amazingly—precocious. As a child he had never uttered sublimities, but was, on the contrary, extremely interested in policemen.

Here and there he himself, designedly as well as casually, gives us glimpses of his childhood. In the *Memoir of Sir Herbert Tree*, which he edited, he tells us how his brother was going to dine out at the house

* *Herbert Beerbohm Tree: Some Memories of Him and of his Art* [By Lady Tree and others.] Collected by Max Beerbohm.

opposite on a Sunday night and how he, a little boy, watched that house from his bedroom window.

" I was fascinated, in spite of myself, and, much as I pitied Herbert for being so unlikely now to go to Heaven, I was also envying him not a little, too."

There emerges from that incident just a nice child, with an orthodox upbringing.

At school, we learn from Mr. John Lane's Bibliography, printed at the end of the *Works*, he wrote a letter to the Editor of the *Carthusian*, signed Diogenes, complaining against the dullness of that journal. But it was not until he went up to Merton that he began to feel the joyous discomfort of a procreant mind. He had, perhaps, written one or two little essays for the *Oxford Magazine*, and no more, when he met Aubrey Beardsley for the first time. The artist, almost his twin in age, after an hour's acquaintance, told him, with a curious and almost uncanny certainty, that he ought to write. Beardsley then went in some excitement to Henry Harland who, with him as art editor, was projecting the *Yellow Book:* and explained to him that he had found a contributor—a new man, who had never written anything to speak of, an undergraduate, an amateur. He had already, it appears, asked Max Beerbohm to write something for them. Harland raised hands in horror. That was not at all what he wanted—clever young men who had never written anything—Oxford—amateurishness—not at all. Beardsley's enthusiasm was, however, quite undamped, and he held his tongue until the " written something " arrived. That was *The Defence of Cosmetics*, which

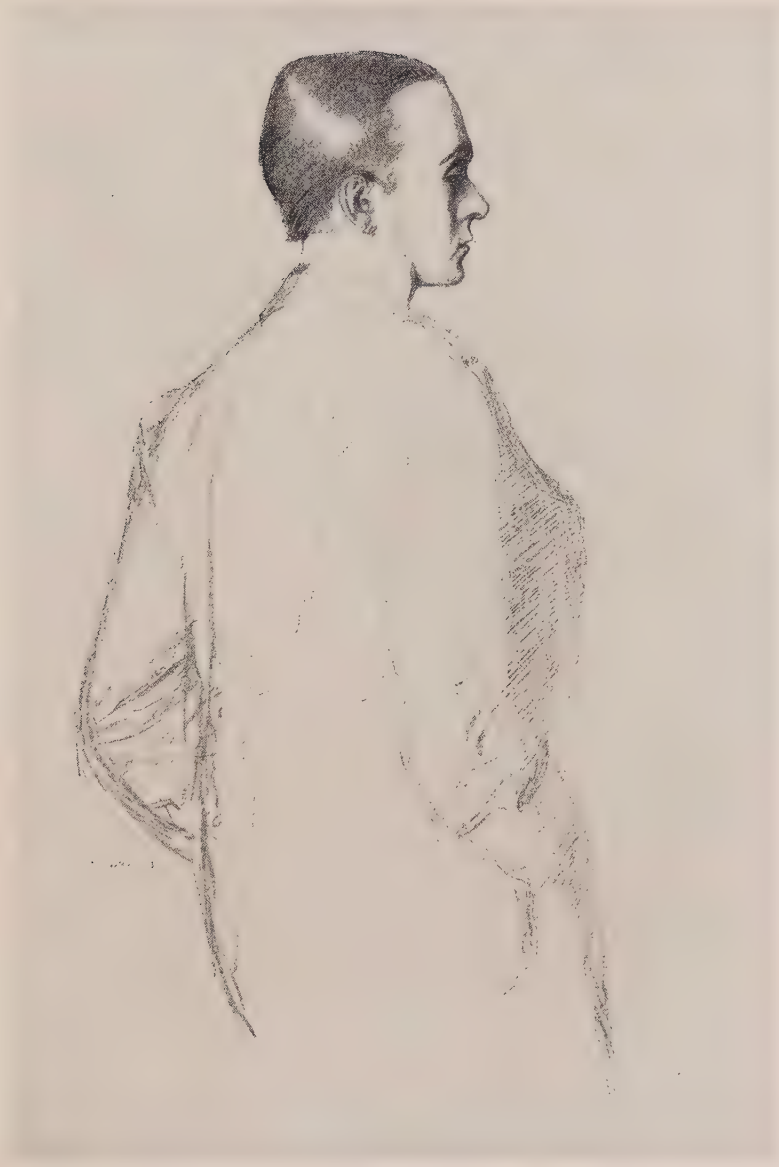
appeared in April, 1894, in the first volume of the *Yellow Book*, and was subsequently reprinted in the *Works*, under the title *The Pervasion of Rouge*. At about the same time Mr. John Lane, as the publisher of the *Yellow Book*, urged Max Beerbohm to go on writing and gave him just that encouragement of praise which is of such paramount consideration to a young man. I do not mean by this that, but for the influence of Aubrey Beardsley and Mr. Lane, Max Beerbohm would never have written, for he certainly would, being of that kind described at the beginning of this chapter who have got to write. But who knows what uncertainties, what troubles and hesitations were avoided by the perspicacity of these two men ?

It is then twenty-seven years since Max Beerbohm made his first appearance. During that time he has published, apart from his caricatures, four books of essays, one of parodies, one of stories, one long novel, and one " long-short " story—eight volumes in all.* Apart from these he has done a good deal of work for a number of periodicals and newspapers which has not and never will be collected in book-form : and for twelve years, from 1898–1910, he was the dramatic critic for the *Saturday Review ;* for which journal he also wrote numerous book reviews and miscellaneous articles.

" My gifts are small . . ." he says.

We may easily imagine the pious, and in some instances satisfied astonishment of prolific and probably

* Various old stories and essays, together with some of the *Saturday Review* work, and some stories hitherto unpublished, will be found in the Collected Edition of Mr. Beerbohm's writings.



MAX BEERBOHM.

From the Lithographed Drawing in the *Liber Juniorum*
by William Rothenstein (1898).

harder-working, "competent" writers who tenderly watch the yearly increase of the shelf which upholds their own works, when they realise, with the help of a two-foot rule, that but seven and a half inches comfortably covers Mr. Beerbohm's entire "output."

"Writing comes to me with great difficulty," he once said a good many years ago, when I was very young and incredulous: and I should still be incredulous if almost (not quite) any other author of accomplishment gave emphasis to that protestation. That he took infinite pains with his work, writing and re-writing, that nothing was allowed by him to pass from its lodging in the periodical press to its permanent home in a book without "scrutiny and titivation" (as he said in an introductory note to *More*) I was respectfully aware. But that writing should come with difficulty to one who wished to write and had things to write about was rather depressing news to a young man whose first novel had just been published. To such an one writing may seem so easy—so fatally easy: and that observation of Max Beerbohm was salutary. It is the author's job to write, you may say; and it can't be so very difficult. And there is, I believe, some sort of "School" of, or movement in, writing, which insists that so long as you get your meaning down, clear and intelligible, upon paper the actual language does not matter a rap. (If I am wrong in saying there is a definite school which vociferates this principle, I do know that it will not lack for pupils, or for professors, whenever it *is* founded.)

Not long after that conversation, it was plain to me

that Mr. Beerbohm made his own difficulties : and some of them will be dealt with in detail as we come to various aspects of his writing. He has set himself a standard on a very high hill, and he is ever climbing up to make sure that there is no higher hill to set it on. And there is not.

It is true, also, that he writes—has written for the past two years—much more than he used to. Perhaps it is that the persistence of his inspiration is greater. It may be that his themes for essays (he seldom wrote stories in his earlier days) refused to shape themselves clearly in his mind. There is always a chance that it was not the actual writing which was difficult so much as the preliminary thinking. Who can say ? Not the author, probably. Once his work is done, satisfactorily to himself, a writer seldom troubles to remember the very real pains of its delivery.

" I do not recall," he wrote at the end of his twelve years' work as dramatic critic to the *Saturday Review*, " I do not recall that I have once sat down eager to write, or that I have once written with ease and delight. But the cause of this lack was not in the nature of my theme. It was in myself. Writing has always been up-hill work to me, mainly because I am cursed with an acute literary conscience."

That denied page of corrected MS. would have at all events made evident to the reader the extreme care that Mr. Beerbohm always gives to his work. The trouble he has been at to cut and to polish gives a peculiar distinction and beauty to everything that bears his name.

In a copy of that first number of the *Yellow Book*, which I have studied, the last process of titivation is palpable in alterations and insertions of commas, and in erasures. Incidentally, he has treated his essay in the bound volume just as though it were a common page-proof, to be passed for reprinting in the *Works*. But then he was never one of those who have a superstitious veneration for books as books. "If," he says in his essay on *Whistler's Writing*, "I were reading a First Folio Shakespeare by my fireside, and if the match-box were ever so little beyond my reach, I vow I would light my cigarette with a spill made from the margin of whatever page I were reading." And, upon my word, I am not sure that he wouldn't. (He has been known even to titivate to the most unholy ends another author's words, to make additions, to provide imaginary portraits of the author and numerous other drawings. Examples of the sort of thing I mean will be found on those pages of this book which illustrate unauthorised illustrations to a work of Mr. Richard Le Gallienne.)

Some of the alterations in that old *Yellow Book* are not so much improvements as expressions of a moment's mood: some show that in two years he had grown out of certain youthfulnesses: all are small, save for one long passage which is cut completely out. Here it is "But" replaced by "And," here "revival" and there "renaissance" oust "renascence," there again "would merit" becomes "deserves." Many "lovelinesses" are given capital L's, and "Oxford, 1894" is inserted at the end. This is all very trivial, but a rich profusion

of such trivialities makes their weight nevertheless, like the traditional pound of feathers.

It is in the unchanging things that we find our greatest pleasure—the arrangement of an old nursery, or of particular books upon a particular shelf (*Poems and Ballads* between *Wuthering Heights* and Jehoshaphat Aspin's *Sports and Pastimes :* there now for no other reason than that they were put in that order, inappropriately but for no especial purpose many years ago) : and though by imperceptible degrees the apple-tree grows sturdier, its blossom each year remains the same. If as a young tree it put forth tiger-lilies, we should certainly say that it was very affected and precocious, and we would hope that the under-gardener would cut it down—the nasty, unnatural thing. Unfortunately, however, such is the peculiarity of our vision that we are frequently prone to mistake any fine but very early blossoming for, so to put it, tiger-lilies ; and the under-gardener gets to work and sees what he can do about it. The head-gardener, on the other hand, if he understands his job, bides his time and waits for the next year to see whether, after all, it is real apple-blossom or not. He will then, if he has kept his under-strapper in hand, perceive that what had almost tricked his sharp eyes was only a particularly fine variety of orthodox blossom ; and he will be glad : and many years later, when, the fine blossom being still as fine, the tree has grown sturdy and mature, he will be very glad and rub his hands. " But for me . . ." he will say.

So, though the analogy is imperfect and somewhat

laboured, it has been with Mr. Max Beerbohm and the critics. He began to write when he was very young, and his writing was so surprisingly good that the critics, unaccustomed, as we are now, to subscribing the literary reputations of an hundred nurseries, looked askance. Some jeered, and some, understanding their job, remembered that letters were letters, and that the age of the writer, though quite interesting, should not be used either for palliation or impeachment; while some took him at the foot of the letter, put on cap and gown, and swished the birch. After the publication of *The Defence of Cosmetics* in Volume I. of the *Yellow Book*, Mr. Punch, for example, inconspicuously printed

ARS COSMETICA.

How would the little busy bore
Improve on Nature's dower,
And praise a painted Laïs more
Than maidens in their flower?
How deftly he dabs on his grease,
How neatly spreads his wax;
And finds in dirty aids like these
The charm that Nature lacks.
In barber-born, cosmetic skill,
"Art" would be busy too;
And folly finds some business still
For popinjays to do!

In his attitude to the critics appeared almost the only trace of bitterness that Mr. Beerbohm ever showed in those days—the only thorn the young apple-tree put forth. When other artists tried to burlesque Aubrey

Beardsley (Max among them, though not for publication) they were often amusing, but their pens, dipped in acid, were blunted, if only (but not only) because, for their very lives they could not imitate his 'line.' The early essays of Max Beerbohm and the fulminations and lampoons of his critics were analogous, so much better did he write than they.

Mr. Mostyn T. Pigott was at least genuinely amusing about the *Yellow Book*. The following verses, a close parody of *The Jabberwock*, and called *The Second Coming of Arthur* (A Certain Past Adapted to a Possible Future), originally appeared, I believe, in *The World*.

'Twas rollog, and the minim potes
  Did mime and mimble in the cafe;
All footly were the Philerotes,
  And Daycadongs outstrafe.

Beware the Yallerbock, my son!
  The aims that rile, the art that racks,
Beware the Aub-aub bird, and shun
  The stumious Beerbohmax.

He took Excalibur in hand:
  Long time the canxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Jonbul tree,
  And stood awhile in thought.

Then, as veep Vigo's marge he trod,
  The Yallerbock, with tongue of blue,
Came piffling through the Headley Bod,
  And flippered as it flew.

One, two! One, two! And through and through
Excalibur went snicker-snack!
He took its dead and bodless head
And went jucunding back.

And hast thou slain the Yallerbock?
Come to my arms, my squeamish boy!
Oh, brighteous peace! Purlieu! Purlice!
He jawbled in his joy.

'Twas rollog, and the minim potes
Did mime and mimble in the cafe;
All footly were the Philerotes,
And Daycadongs outstrafe.

Max Beerbohm too has been known to make personal fun of people, though not always for publication. The following verse was written by him some years ago about a well-known writer:

ELEGY ON *ANY* LADY.

That she adored me as the most
Adorable of males
I think I may securely boast.
Dead women tell no tales.

In his Letter to the Editor, printed in Volume II. of the *Yellow Book*, he answered the serious abuse poured upon his essay in Volume I.:

> It is a pity that critics should show so little sympathy with writers, and curious when we consider that most of them tried to be writers themselves, once.

That last venomous comma is worth a page of invective and is entirely characteristic. We have heard

of a life hanging by a thread, so why should not " a charming little reputation " depend upon a comma ?

However, to return to the critics—they have in one respect all become wise head-gardeners now, and have recognised the high truth that whilst much blossom predicates fruit, it is for its own beautiful (but materially useless) sake worthy of the warmest admiration. We, who never forget the prime importance of being earnest, look about us now and again for sheer refreshment, for something to read upon which we can absolutely rely not to bother us with piety or pity, with serious issues, with the true reflection of our own sombre habit of mind, and we think of *The Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* or *The Wrecker* and other books which can ordinarily be relied upon for amusement, and we reject them (sometimes) because we require that which, besides not being useful, is positively and especially ornamental : and we happily call to mind one of Mr. Beerbohm's cartoons in which he represents the Shade of Stevenson being shown by Mr. Gosse the modern novelists standing upon their upturned tubs, and the Shade of Stevenson says to his guide, " You have shown me the propagandists and the pamphleteers and the grinders of axes and the rollers of logs (or words of that meaning), now will you show me some of the *writers ?* "

That was a very valuable piece of criticism, widely if not universally deserved. And in writing stories for those stories' sakes, essays to amuse and not to edify, in never preaching, Mr. Beerbohm has practised what he—implicitly laid down as a golden rule.

III

Up to a certain point in his career—a point almost impossible to fix—Max Beerbohm did depend for his effects upon the ultimate refinements of the writer's art : and what in his work looks so engaging, so delightful under the magnifying glass is seen to much less advantage by the naked, normal vision. After that point, which is like one of those elusive spots that dance away, when we are liverish, from the corners of our eyes, but which, for convenience's sake, I will put at about nine years ago, his attitude began, as we shall see, to shift. For about two-thirds of its life the apple-tree gave only blossom : then it began to bear fruit ; with the queer result that the gardener-critics, who had, as I have said, learned to appreciate the blossom for its own sake, became or at least are now becoming just a little disappointed at the appearance of the apples. They had been accustomed to the blossom, they could hardly recognise the fruit, and would not at all but for the fortunate and delectable fact that *this* apple-tree bears both fruit and flower at one and the same time. The apples are rosy and luscious, thin-skinned, juicy, perfectly formed—but we do need the blossom as well. The way Mr. Beerbohm has said it has generally improved very notably upon what he has said.

"For my own part," he says in his essay on *Ouida*, "I am a dilettante, a *petit-maître*. I love best in

literature delicate and elaborate ingenuities of form and style."

It is this very delicacy, both in the manner and matter of his own writings, which has distinguished him. His aim is clearly to amuse himself and us—in that order. He has always written in the first person: more than once he has made his characters speak of him by name: he has made his appearance as a character in his own stories not as a merely general and impersonal first person, but as the specific and identical Max: he has given his views upon things in general with a happy and conscious affectation of vanity which led reviewers of the past to talk of his "delicate impertinences," which, having a regard for the meaning of words, they were not. The description which would have fitted better is "sheer, delicious, damned cheek."

"To give an accurate and exhaustive account of that period," he writes of the year 1880, "would need a far less brilliant pen than mine . . . and I look to Professor Gardiner and to the Bishop of Oxford."

Those of us who once were made to slumber with our elbows upon Dr. Stubbs' *History* will cordially bear him out.

Here *Punch* stepped in again, with better heart this time, and published an extract "From the Queer and Yellow Book" purporting to be written by Max Mereboom. This was a brief sketch of the history of 1894. It ends:

"Perhaps in my study I have fallen so deeply beneath the spell of the age, that I have tended to

George IV.
A Caricature by Max (1894).

underrate its unimportance. . . . But to give an accurate account of the period would need a far less brilliant pen than mine; and I look to Jerome K. Jerome and to Mr. Clement Scott."

If there is every obvious indication that he was always sure of himself, there is no excuse for taking the obvious too literally. Max Beerbohm as a young writer probably had to stand up against rebuffs like other young writers, though somehow it is not easy to imagine it. He seems, however, to have been singularly happy in having made a career and a name for himself on his own terms. To do well what you want to do, and to avoid being forced to do anything else testifies not only to ability, but to character. In a circle the magnitude of which is no doubt much, though unconsciously, exaggerated by most professional writers, he had been successful from the uttermost beginning. For a wider circle (this applies to his writings rather than to his caricatures) and the success which corresponds to it, he had to wait a long time, almost indeed until the publication of *And Even Now*.

In his maturity he has shown that his personal way of writing was not merely youthful "cheek," but a manner of expression that was for him inevitable. "My gifts are small . . ." Perhaps, so far as his writing goes, they are, relatively, small. He has not the all-embracing love of human nature, the ecstasy, the gusto of the greatest writers. But he is a remarkably astute critic of himself when he says that he has used his gifts "very well and discreetly, never straining them." He writes with a fine, steel pen, not

a big, soft, spluttering quill: and he knows perfectly well what that fine pen cannot do. Whether he yet knows all that it can do is uncertain. I certainly don't.

The more I think of it the wiser seems his estimate of the use to which he has put his gifts. Never but once to any serious degree has he tried them beyond their powers. Of course, he *is* less human than Lamb, for his vision is narrow. This he knows perfectly well and acts accordingly.

"He is the spirit of urbanity; he is town," writes Mr. Holbrook Jackson in *All Manner of Folk*. "He is civilization conserving itself and laughing at itself . . . His laughter is always Meredith's 'laughter of the mind' . . . He is an urbane controversialist discussing life apropos of himself. This egotism delights us because Max is delightful. He himself would not deny the charge of *poseur*, but his pose is as natural as anything really civilized can be natural. Civilization is the art of the human race: Max Beerbohm is a detail of that art . . . He is the finishing touch, the ornament, . . . He is, in short, a dandy. You would gather that from his essays; from the careful and inimitable elegance of his prose, and from the deliberate way it is jewelled with exotic words. You would deduce a dandy from such essays, but not a D'Orsay, although Max is also an amateur in portraiture. D'Orsay abandoned himself to personal display; his gorgeous clothes were flamboyant weeds. Max is never abandoned, and you would never deduce such a dandy from his essays. What you would deduce would be a person more dignified, less theatrical, but none the less proud of

himself; and the quiet eccentricity of his clothes would serve as a suitable background for the sly brilliance of his wit. For the dandyism of Max is intrinsic; it is a state of being rather than an assumption: it is psychologic, expressing itself in wit rather than clothes; and wit is the dandyism of the mind."

I have quoted this passage because in it Mr. Jackson has so adequately and befittingly estimated the Max who was fathomable from—say—the first three books. But that is not the Max who comes to light from the work in its entirety. And that is not merely to say that he has grown mature, which, in the course of nature, he has: or become mellowed, which, though that process is sometimes avoidable by Nature, is also true of him: but the examination of his whole work at the present time reveals a Max who is not only different now, but who (after adding two and two, very diffidently, together) must always have been different. Max Beerbohm, previous to that unascertainable point in his career, masked himself, not in craftiness, but in misgiving. He was probably afraid to let himself go. Now, though careful still, he is less afraid. His latest work occasionally shows the faults of too great a generosity in this sense, but—one thing with another—it is infinitely better work, because he has given to it more of himself.

IV

THE outstanding features of Mr. Beerbohm's literary work are the permanence of his inspiration, his style, and a certain daintiness of invention. His sense of humour can hardly be separated from his style : the two must be regarded as inextricable. Some men write amusingly of common things ; some write amusingly of amusing things : some write of amusing things unamusingly—that is to say, in the last predicament, though the author may succeed in making you laugh at the humour of his subject, it is the subject and not the author which is the immediate—and only—cause of your giggling. Mr. Beerbohm has written—though not often—of subjects which would be generally amusing, and he has drawn a great deal of latent fun out of the most common things : but the fun, which from first to last has never upon any occasion been of the bucolic or uproarious kind, has been so intermingled with his style of writing that each almost invariably includes the other.

Deliberately to sit down and try to sift separate sentences of a particular author for nuggets seems, on the face of it, an excruciatingly funny procedure : but the closer we look—the stronger our magnifying glass—the more we shall find. The biggest nuggets will, paradoxically, be caught by the finest sieve.

In one of his earliest essays, reprinted in *The Works*,

upon *Dandies and Dandies*, he tells us that Brummell left Oriel for a commission in the Tenth Hussars. "Crack though the regiment was . . . young Mr. Brummell could not bear to see all his brother-officers in clothes exactly like his own." The separation of the epithet from the noun it usually goes with arm in arm is typical of Mr. Beerbohm's humour. Anybody could and generally would say "though it was a crack regiment." Wit in style is often but the quick snatching at unlikely straws, and Mr. Beerbohm has often bid fair to make us split our sides by splitting hairs. There was much in his early work which, though it provoked, and does still provoke, pleasure, can safely be put down to the perversity of youth. He invented words; he wrote "innowise" and "inverideed," he exhorted us "Perpend!" But Max Beerbohm remains Max Beerbohm still. His strongly individual sense of the unfitness of things, his "mischievous and spritely wit," as it obviously must have been called on many occasions, was exemplified in one of his more recent essays, *Servants*, where he writes of the pond by Jack Straw's Castle "at all seasons so much barked around by excitable dogs." In that sentence lies the chief secret of Mr. Beerbohm's style—the supreme cultivation of splendid silliness. Other instances of the same sort of thing tumble over one another out of memory. Again to quote from that Letter to the Editor of the *Yellow Book*, when he complains of his treatment at the hands of the reviewers: "If I had only signed myself, D. Cadent or Parrar Docks . . . all the pressmen would have said that I had given them a very delicate

bit of satire. But I did not, and *hinc*, as they themselves love to say, *illæ lacrimæ*." That is all—just the cleavage of that tag—but there is no one else who would have thought of it. It is needless to expatiate further upon the subject, save to point out how brimful of meaning, how allusive that little passage is.

This drew forth a counter-retort from *Punch*, called, "A Phalse Note on George the Fourth." "Nay," it begins, "but it is useless to protest. Much bosh and bauble-tit and pop-limbo has been talked about George the Phorth . . . I like to phancy the watchful evil phaces of my Criticks as they read this article. Phair men, but infelix, they will lavish their anger in epigramme. Not that I care a little tittle . . . But! But let them not outgribe too soon, but rather dance and be glad, and trip the cockawhoop. For! For . . . they will read with tears and desiderium unless I . . . in jolliness and glad indulgence whisper to them—

THIS IS A GOAK!"

It was, having regard to some of the tricks of Mr. Beerbohm's style at that time, rather a good goak.

Then the amusing abuse of qualification is seen in the diverse services to which he puts the word "rather." "The labour I set myself," he says in his "History" of the year 1880, "is rather Herculean." "I am quite unable to cope with burglars"—he is complaining in an essay on *Punch* that, after Keene's pictures of burglars in knee-breeches and masks, he cannot persuade himself that a burglar is really but an ordinary individual in trousers—"so they come rather often." "The

MAX.
A Caricature in *Vanity Fair* by Walter Sickert (1897).

ancient Egyptians were great at scientific dodges . . . Sand buried the memory of those dodges for a rather long time."

One of the most telling qualities in a good style, a quality specially remarkable in Stevenson's, is that by which the reader is given a little happy mild surprise by the correct, but unusual, use of ordinary words. The Mashers who " were often admirable upon the steps of clubs " provide a case in point.

So much for what Mr. Beerbohm himself might accuse Mr. Frank Harris of calling style-humour, to which it will be necessary to return. Another salient characteristic, I have said, is a kind of daintiness which is wedded to the style, but which can be separated from it because it is almost always seen in the author's chosen subjects. And of these, his first love, to which as all good lovers should, he returns again and again (thus illustrating the third characteristic), is costume —clothes themselves and anecdotes about clothes.

In *Dandies and Dandies* he says :

> For some years I had felt convinced that in a perfect dandy this affinity must reach a point when the costume itself, planned with the finest sensibility, would change with the emotional changes of its wearer, automatically . . .

One day, he tells us, he went into a club of which a member was Lord X., who had been plunging up to the hilt on the day's running.

> His lordship was there, fingering feverishly the sinuous riband of the tape-machine. I sat at a little distance, watching him. Two results straggled forth within an hour, and, at the second of these I saw with wonder Lord X.'s

linen actually flush for a moment and then turn deadly pale. I looked again and saw that his boots had lost their lustre. Drawing nearer I found that grey hairs had begun to show themselves in his raven coat. It was very painful and yet, to me, very gratifying. In the cloak-room, when I went for my own hat and cane, there was the hat with the broad brim and (lo !) over its iron-blue surface little furrows had been ploughed by Despair.

Fifteen years or so later we find him changing, in the Duke of Dorset's shirt, two white pearls, respectively, to black and pink, because of his sudden love for *Zuleika Dobson*. His fidelity to clothes is remarkable. Besides the essay set apart for that subject there are constant references elsewhere—in *King George the Fourth, Poor Romeo !*—where we find an antiquarian inquisitiveness into the history of a forgotten dandy, in *Madame Tussaud's*, as well as in the stories, *Zuleika Dobson*, *The Happy Hypocrite*, and *Enoch Soames* (the first of the *Seven Men*), and of course and especially in the caricatures of all periods.

The daintiness of Mr. Beerbohm's invention is best seen in *The Happy Hypocrite : a fairy tale for tired men*. " The word ' classic ' inevitably suggests itself " wrote one reviewer, when this story—Number One of " The Bodley Booklets "—was first published in 1896 : and the passing of a quarter of a century (which seems like a patent fact stated in terms of gross exaggeration) has shown that even a much-profaned word may make a very sound suggestion.

The story is now perhaps one of the most widely known of Mr. Beerbohm's works, and has within the last few years been reissued, expensively and with

illustrations. It is a really good story of the days of the Regency, with an excellent plot, very "slickly" and neatly worked out. But apart from that there are accessories, such as copious footnotes giving quotations from imaginary authorities of the period. These are separately enjoyable; ornaments which do not draw away too much attention from a clearly-marked outline.

The hero of this elegant romance is Lord George Hell, a dreadfully naughty man, who at Carlton House "often sat up until long after bedtime," the mention of whose very name caused riotous children to "behave," who "seldom sat down to the fashionable game of Limbo with less than four, and sometimes with *as many as seven*, aces up his sleeve." When the simple little dancer, Jenny Mere, refuses him, he thinks for a moment of drowning himself.

> There was no one in the garden to prevent him, and in the morning they would find him floating there, one of the noblest of love's victims. The garden would be closed in the evening. There would be no performance in the little theatre. It might be that Jenny Mere would mourn him. "Life is a prison, without bars," he murmured, as he walked away.

As elsewhere so here the unnecessary but usual word is omitted. We are not directly told that Lord George thought better of his rash inspiration; and the ellipsis is very pleasing.

At Garble's, "that nightly resort of titled rips and roysterers," Lord George would "amble leisurely, clad in Georgian costume, which was not then, of course,

fancy dress, as it is now." While at the beginning of the little book the author tells us: "I hold that Candour is good, only when it reveals good actions or good sentiments and, when it reveals evil, itself is evil, even also."

Of fairy stories there were two written at about this time which call, gently, for mention. One of them, *Yai and the Moon,* appeared in *The Pageant* for 1897. This little story has, besides the inevitable sense of fun, real dignity and beauty. In a measure, it even foreshadows the pathos which underlies some of the work done more than twenty years later—a little Japanese girl runs away from her precise and sophisticated betrothed to the arms of her lover, the Moon. For one perfect night she glides with him across the sky, but with him—sinks into the sea. And in the morning the sun finds her, and believes that she has been drowned in coming out to await his rising.

The Story of the Small Boy and the Barley Sugar appeared in *The Parade: an Illustrated Gift-Book for Boys and Girls,* also in 1897. It has two black and white illustrations by the author which are just recognisably his and are strictly suitable.

The fairy who sells the stick of barley sugar to the small boy blows upon it, so that every time he takes a bite he may have a wish. So in the first place he wishes his little sweetheart out of school, where she has been kept standing after hours with the dunce's cap on her head. And she?—she crams all the barley sugar into her mouth at once. "And, Jill!" the small boy says piteously, "you never wished!" "Oh yes,

I did," she retorts. " I wished that you hadn't eaten that first bit."

This story begins :

> Little reader, unroll your map of England.
> Look over its coloured counties and find Rutland.
> You shall not read this story till you have found Rutland ; for it was there, and in the village of Dauble, that these things happened.
> You need not look for Dauble ; it is too small to be marked.

And it ends :

> Little reader, roll up your map of England.
> But first look once more at Rutland, that you may remember where it is.
> Perhaps you have often laughed at Rutland, because it is the tiniest of all the counties, and is painted pink.
> Now see how neatly and well they have painted it, never going over the edges, as you would have done.
> And know, also, that though it looks so small, it is really more than three times as big as your nursery, and that things can happen there.
> It is very foolish to laugh at Rutland.

It is not right to say that this sort of thing was " all very well for the 'nineties," or " wonderful for a young man of twenty-four." The method of expression may, so to speak, bear a date ; but the virtue of the essential wit is " proceeding."

V

Mr. Beerbohm's fastidiousness of style, his *épicurisme* (which, somehow, really does look as though it had a finer shade of meaning when written in French), can be well illustrated by isolated sentences, which, from time to time and from the whole range of his work, return to the mind, and each of which gives us its peculiar little glow of pleasure.

Of Queen Caroline.—"Fate wrote her a most tremendous tragedy, and she played it in tights."

Of George IV.—"We know that he was fond of quoting those incomparable poets, Homer."

Of jokes in the usual comic paper.—"Whether such jests require, or are in any way strengthened by a picture of a *décolletée* girl sitting in the shadow of a standard lamp, with a bald man bending over the back of her chair, is a question on which I have already made up my mind."

Of an inexpensive fan.—"The sticks are of white bone, clipped together with a semicircular ring that is not silver."

Of Mr. Shaw.—"His sterling affectations" and "frivolous convictions," and "If his judgments are scatter-brained, he has, at any rate, brains to scatter."

Of the "dressing" of shop windows.—"Why should the sea give up its dead to fishmongers who harrow us with the corpses?"

Of foreigners of genius.—" . . . Infantile wide-eyed Slavs . . . greatly blighted Scandinavians . . ."

Of the approach to Oxford from the railway station.—" A bit of Manchester through which Apollo had once passed."

" Where were the black cypresses of which I had heard so much ? And where the blue sky for them to be black against ? "

" He was the backbone of the nation, but ought backbones to be exposed ? "

" A long straight avenue of elms that were almost blatantly immemorial."

" His very age was moderate : a putative thirty-six, not more. (' Not less,' I would have said in those days.) "

" Head or tail was just what I hadn't made of that slim green volume."

" A soft black hat of clerical kind but of Bohemian intention."

" With all deference to photographers and to such artists as hopefully vie with them on their own ground . . ."

" He had a thin vague beard—or rather, he had a chin on which a large number of hairs weakly curled and clustered to cover its retreat."

" His costume was a model of rich and sombre moderation, drawing, not calling, attention to itself."

There are, too, hoaxes played upon the reader, such as the description of Prangley Valley (*More*), a delightful and undiscovered place quite close to London, of which no one has ever heard, and which the author apologises for giving away and helping to make popular.

Curiously enough, in *And Even Now*, there is a much less colourable fraud. This was a memoir of a (seemingly Carpathian) genius called Luntic Kolniyatsch. And when we find Mr. Beerbohm at the end of the essay crowing over the public because he can read the master's works in the original Gibrisch, I begin to wonder a little at the people who were, I know, hoodwinked by it, on its first appearance in some paper.

Judging by other people's opinions frequently expressed, it seems that *More* is the best beloved of Max Beerbohm's books. In it as well as in *The Works* the author is deliberately and consciously self-satisfied with what he might then have called the cock-certainty of youth. Where *The Works* had provoked, *More* exasperated the more pompous of his elders. Indeed, there are people living (it is doubtful if the world could get on without them) whose only epithet for his work would be " affected." They talk of " wasted powers " and a keen brain put to no serious purpose. Such people will find their attitude explained for them in the essay on *Going Back to School.*

> Not that I had any special reason for hating school. Strange as it may seem to my readers, I was not unpopular there. I was a modest, good humoured boy. It is Oxford that has made me insufferable. . . . Undergraduates owe their happiness chiefly to the consciousness that they are no longer at school. The nonsense which was knocked out of them at school is all put gently back at Oxford or Cambridge.

Very earnest and glum-minded folk, to whom the quiet, and indeed harmless, amusement of their fellow-

men makes no appeal, might find it in their eager-hearts to condone that. But for the nonsense that, gently put back in 1890, remained in 1920 (and still remains), they can find no forgiveness. Max Beerbohm has not tried heavily to make the world better: he has succeeded in making a small part of it happier. For his hand is always light; in writing he has a soft, stroking touch, as sure and inevitable as, in drawing, his own "line."

Yet that passage quoted above together with another which will be quoted soon is an excellent corrective to the largely sentimental pretence which leads men to talk of their school-days as the happiest time of their lives.

> As I hovered, in grey knickerbockers, on a cold and muddy field, round the outskirts of a crowd that was tearing itself limb from limb for the sake of a leathern bladder, I would often wish for a nice, warm room and a good game of hunt-the-slipper. And, when we sallied forth, after dark, in the frost, to the swimming bath, my heart would steal back to the fireside in Writing School and the plot of Miss Braddon's latest novel.

Very soft and effeminate, or babyish, is it not? But —how honest a record of a small boy's inmost meditations! There are boys from whose composition the instinct for violent games has been ruthlessly omitted. Let us willingly grant that, for them as for the rest, much compulsory exercise *and* thrashing is, for the development of their little bodies and their little characters, essentially necessary. But do not let us pretend that they all like it.

> You—he addresses a small boy going back to school—will have torn yourself from your bed, at the sound of a harsh bell, have washed, quickly, in very cold water, have

scurried off to Chapel, gone to first school and been sent down several places in your form, tried to master your next construe, in the interval of snatching a tepid breakfast, been kicked by a bigger boy, and had a mint of horrible experiences, long before I, your elder by a few years, have awakened, very gradually, to the tap of knuckles on the panel of my bedroom door. I shall make a leisurely toilet. I shall descend to a warm breakfast, . . . and glance at that morning paper which appeals most surely to my sense of humour. And when I have eaten well of all the dishes on the table, I shall light a cigarette.

In January, 1895, Max Beerbohm was " interviewed " for the *Sketch* and gave his further views on the subject of school.

" I agree with that cosy writer, Mr. James Payn," he said, " who has often pointed out that boys are not a nice race. They are bullies or cowards, according to their size."

" What are your plans now ? " the interviewer asks later on. " Are you going in for literature wholly ? "

" No ; I intend to draw as well—always caricatures."

It is interesting to know that he has been faithful to his early intentions.

At the end of the same interview, he says, apropos of his essay on George IV.

" To treat history as a means of showing one's own cleverness may be rather rough on history, but it has been done by the best historians, from Herodotus to Froude and myself . . . at this moment I am writing a treatise upon *The Brothers of Great Men.*"

" You are a brother of Mr. Beerbohm Tree, I believe ? " asks the interviewer.

" Yes ; he is coming into the series."

The essay about *An Infamous Brigade* doubly illustrates the author's manner at the end of the 'nineties. He had seen a fire in the distance and had driven towards it.

> Persons in absurd helmets ran about pouring cascades of cold water on the flames. These, my cabman told me, were firemen. I jumped out and, catching one of them by the arm, bade him sharply desist from his vandalism. I told him that I had driven miles to see this fire, that great crowds of Londoners, poor people with few joys, were there to see it also, and I asked him who was he that he should dare to disappoint us. Without answering my arguments, he warned me that I must not interfere with him " in the discharge of his duty." The silly crowd would not uphold me, and I fell back, surreptitiously slitting his water-hose with a pen-knife.

That, though delightful and amusing, is the sort of thing only a very young man thinks worth saying. As Max Beerbohm has grown older he has learned to prefer nonsense that is more nonsensical. However, it is unlikely that there is any one at Oxford or Cambridge now who will not recognise in that affectation of ignorance—". . . my cabman told me . . ." a counterpart of some prevalent whim. Indeed, that sort of thing is by no means confined to undergraduates. The question " Who is Connie Gilchrist ? " has become the model for much judicial humour of the present day.

But on the opposite page comes a genuine triumph of restraint which might have been expected of a much maturer writer. He is speaking of the magnificent fires they have in Chicago :

And, indeed, it must be splendid to see those twenty-three story buildings come crashing down in less time than was required to build them up.

How many people who had thought of saying that would not have pointed to the joke by saying " even in less time . . . ? "

In *More* there is one essay which defies the snipper of short quotations, but which provides instances of almost all those elusive gestures under present and laborious scrutiny. It is *The Case of Prometheus*—who, according to Mr. Beerbohm, is still *vinctus* upon the summit of Mount Caucasus. His authority is a Mr. Richard Mitchell (a most convincing name), a reliable but prosaic traveller who read a paper about his strange discovery before the Royal Geographical Society. He had not succeeded in reaching the summit and rescuing Prometheus ; but Mr. Beerbohm, at the time of writing, was preparing for his own departure on that merciful errand. He tells us that he was going to shoot the bird of Jupiter and hail the captive with words of good cheer—Χαῖρε Ἰαπετιονίδη ! He had also ordered for him a tweed suit and a dressing case whose fittings were marked Π.

Mr. Beerbohm is rather generally considered as a writer of entire originality. But that we should only say having due regard to the relativity of all language. Let us, for once, be quite literal and content ourselves so far as he is concerned with " remarkable originality," and, having found that qualification, in what direction do we turn for the residue which is to be imputed to " influence " ? In *The Works*, in *More*, and rather

particularly in the essay *An Infamous Brigade*, there is a hint—perhaps rather a broad hint—of de Quincey, both in the matter and the style. But this suggestion I throw out with the more diffidence because so many shots of that kind are, nowadays, made in the dark, and because I know of at least one writer accused by critics of having learned valuable lessons from a master no one word of whose books he had ever read. That can be countered by the further accusation that the writer has found his " influence " at second or third hand, that he has, unconsciously of course, imitated C., who derived from B. who in turn sat, not idle, at the feet of A. But for himself the reader can compare de Quincey's account of Coleridge interrupting his tea to go and see a fire with the (much more amusing) narrative of Max Beerbohm. And sometimes you feel, so punctilious was it, and so odd, that his early style was influenced by the language of heraldry.

VI

Ten years elapsed between the appearance of *More* and the next collection of essays, *Yet Again*. Those ten years were, in a manner of speaking, the most barren in Mr. Beerbohm's life. It is true that he "worked harder" during that than at any other time: but it was work that had got to be done, week by week, as we know, in the *Saturday Review*: and as we know also the best work of a writer is done, not for the *Saturday Review* but for himself. This is not meant in disparagement either of that journal, or of Mr. Beerbohm's contributions to it, all of which were well worth reading, most of which are worth hunting up and reading again. But there is a line firmly ruled between literature and breadandbutterature. A man may say to himself (and I am sure Mr. Beerbohm did): "These people are, very kindly, employing me. I must give them of my best." But no real artist ever gave of his best because, with whatever nobility of impulse, he felt he must. It may happen—it did sometimes happen in the instance under discussion—that the best is given, but that is neither here nor there, and a lively conscience may play the very devil with a good writer.

Though there are many delightful things in *Yet Again*, the book as a whole does show, I think, here and there a certain flatness, which is probably due to mere fatigue. I have never heard any one else say a word in depreciation of the book, and I am not saying this

just to satisfy Mr. Beerbohm's demand for critical reservations. But to me there has always seemed to be a far greater proportion of writing which lacks spontaneity in this book than in any other that bears his name. Indeed, when I think of the others, I would cut out the qualification, and declare that in *Yet Again* there is even a measure of dullness. The novel, *Zuleika Dobson*, about which complaints are fairly common, also belongs, roughly speaking, to this period, though it was published two years later.

Another reason why *Yet Again* falls below Mr. Beerbohm's usual level of excellence is that it marks a point of transition from the brilliant boyish nonsense of his early days to the more brilliant but mature nonsense, and much more than nonsense, of his later work. All transition periods, as we know to our signal cost, are fraught with infelicities. They are of the "awkward age."

The early essays impressed themselves on one's memory not only because they were read at an "impressionable" period: after a like interval the later essays will, I venture to believe, be found to have done so too. I return to them again and again now, and not only for the purposes of this book. I re-read one of those essays for one of those purposes, and then find that I must go on and re-read another for no purpose at all save that for which it was written. Out of the twenty-one essays in *Yet Again* there are few that affect me like that and some of them are a little heavy: but it is very difficult to fix precisely the grounds of my discontentment.

MAX BEERBOHM IN PERSPECTIVE

So much of your final estimate of a book (that is, always, if you are one of those who feel capable of a final estimate of anything, in this life) depends upon your mood when you first read it. And I seem to remember that my first reading of *Yet Again* was clouded by depression that cried out miserably to be dispersed. I was in the country, and all impatient from the time of reading the book's announcement until it arrived. The same post brought me the gift of a new Kipling. I ought to have read that first. Has the fit of depression in the autumn of 1909 permanently biassed my appreciation of the book ? I do feel, quite strongly, that it is the least delightful of Mr. Beerbohm's works ; and yet, when it comes to the point, I can't put in my thumb except to pull out plums of the exemplary species.

For there are in the book inspired suggestions, as for instance, where Max Beerbohm puts it that King Edward (then reigning) should pay a state visit to Switzerland. Who would receive him ? The President of the Swiss Republic. " You didn't expect that," he says. No more you did. You never thought of Switzerland as a republic at all, much less as having a president. There would be a banquet :

> Whereat His Majesty will have the President's wife on his right hand, and will make a brief but graceful speech in the Swiss language (English, French, German, and Italian consecutively) referring to the glorious and never-to-be-forgotten name of William Tell (embarrassed silence) and to the vast numbers of his subjects who annually visit Switzerland (loud and prolonged cheers). Next morning, let there be a review of twenty thousand waiters from all

"A Momentary Vision that once befell Young Millais."
A Caricature by Max (1917).

parts of the country, all the head-waiters receiving a modest grade of the Victorian Order. Later in the day, let the King visit the National Gallery—a hall filled with picture-postcards of the most picturesque spots in Switzerland; and thence let him be conducted to the principal factory of cuckoo-clocks, and after some of the clocks have been made to strike, be heard remarking to the President, with a hearty laugh, that the sound is like that of the cuckoo.

That is characteristic and pure Max, richly allusive.

Not so the *Pathetic Imposture* of the leader-writers who would not say "Lord Rosebery has made a paradox," but

"Lord Rosebery { whether intentionally or otherwise, we leave our readers to decide, / *or*, with seeming conviction, / *or*, doubtless giving rein to the playful humour which is characteristic of him, } has { expressed a sentiment, / *or*, taken on himself to enunciate a theory, / *or*, made himself responsible for a dictum, } which, { we venture to assert, / *or*, we have little hesitation in declaring, / *or*, we may be pardoned for thinking, / *or*, we may say without fear of contradiction, } is { nearly akin to, / *or*, not very far removed from } the paradoxical."

This springs, I think, from a kind of peevishness. It is a fair criticism, in its way amusing: but it did not

come from the sudden hot thrill of the mind which we call inspiration.

Compare the *Pathetic Imposture* with what one of the critics is supposed to say about Kolniyatsch.*

'It is hardly too much to say that a time may be not far distant, and may indeed be nearer than many of us suppose, when Luntic Kolniyatsch will, rightly or wrongly, be reckoned by some of us as not the least of those writers who are especially symptomatic of the early twentieth century and are possibly "for all time" or for a more or less certainly not inconsiderable period of time.'

That is finely said. But I myself go somewhat further.

The difference is very obvious, and probably arises from the greater interest that Mr. Beerbohm feels in an imaginary author than in a real politician. In fact, it is quite on the cards that Mr. Beerbohm would have made no parody of the leader-writers but for the fact that Lord Rosebery is so very much more than a politician. It is that—much more—which prompted him to offer a somewhat oblique sympathy.

In the same volume Mr. Beerbohm scrutinises, in the same way, *The Humour of the Public*, and compiles a list (which he proceeds to discuss quite literally) of the themes which amuse the public, whether in music-halls or in the comic papers:

Mothers-in-law
Henpecked husbands
Twins
Old maids
Jews

* *And Even Now.*

Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Niggers (*not Russians, or other foreigners of any denomination*)
Fatness
Thinness
Long hair (*worn by a man*)
Baldness
Sea-sickness
Stuttering
Bad cheese
"*Shooting the moon*" (*slang expression for leaving a lodging-house without paying the bill*).

There is no nonsense about that essay: it is a scientific enquiry, based upon honest research. The author finds a plausible explanation for the public laugh in each case except that of bad cheese, which beats him, as well it may.

Earlier in this essay, we have one of Mr. Beerbohm's many well-justified laments for the past.

The music-halls I have known for many years. I mean, of course, the real old-fashioned music-halls, not those depressing palaces where you see by grace of a biograph things that you have seen much better, and without a headache, in the street, and pitiable animals being forced to do things which Nature has forbidden them to do—things which we can do so very much better than they, without any trouble. Heaven defend me from those meaningless palaces! But the little old music-halls have always attracted me by their unpretentious raciness, their quaint monotony, the reality of the enjoyment on all those stolidly rapt faces in the audience.

At the end of *Yet Again* there are nine little essays collected (and rescued mainly from the *Saturday Review*) under the title " Words for Pictures." These are, of course, Mr. Beerbohm's own strictly individual words for certain pictures which are, for the most part, well known. ' Peter the Dominican ' by Giovanni Bellini (in the National Gallery), Ho-Tei, a coloured drawing by Hokusai, and Morland's ' The Visit ' (at Hertford House) especially call forth Mr. Beerbohm's exquisite sensibility. He thinks that Ho-Tei, with his imperial paunch, must be a hermit—" one not more affable than Diogenes, yet wiser than he, being at peace with himself and finding (as it were) the honest man without emerging from his own tub."

VII

At Christmas of 1896, the *Saturday Review* brought out an illustrated supplement of considerable distinction. There was a delightful design on the cover by William Rothenstein and by him also, within that cover, drawings and a lithograph. There was a print of Watts' portrait of "the late Mr. William Morris," whilst a coloured reproduction, Rossetti's "Annunciation," though it had been painted in 1850, could not then have been so familiar, even to the expected readers of that Supplement, as it is now.

And there were two contributions by Max Beerbohm —a not very successful caricature of Mr. Wilson Barrett, done in crayon (which is not the right medium for Max's way of drawing),—and a series of parodies called "A Christmas Garland."

So that then was the original whence sprang the book of the same name which was not published until 1913. The victims satirised in that old Christmas Supplement were M*r** C*r*lli, R*ch*rd Le G*ll**nne, H. G. W*lls, I*n M*cl*r*n, and G**rge M*r*d*th; whilst the final sprig was signed, without vowel-asterisks—"Max Beerbohm." In that last essay there is forgotten no vanity or affectation of which, up to that time, he had been guilty; or of which he fails to take golden advantage.

The first story is called *The Sorrows of Millicent: A*

Christmas Cameo, in which Millicent Coral, clasping to her bosom a precious burden wrapped in a shawl (which turns out to be, not a baby, but a copy of her novel, *The Coat of Many Colours,* 15th edition) goes miserably to Grosvenor Square to beard Blackheart, the critic, " who had received a large *douceur* not to review her book and had been promised a royalty of 15 per cent. on every copy not sold after the hundredth thousand." She even produces and utterly shatters the base critic with " an autograph letter from the Secretary of a Great Personage." " His Royal Highness," she reads aloud, " directs me to acknowledge the receipt of your book, and to say that he anticipates reading it with much pleasure,"—all of which shows us, once more, that razors should be kept for their proper uses.

To be fair, Mr. Beerbohm never thought that worth reprinting.

But Simpson, who in the early manner of Mr. W*lls defossilizes a cannon-ball, that had been fired at Naseby, and makes it into a Christmas pudding is worthier of Mr. Beerbohm's steel.

" It has been under treatment in my laboratory, for the last ten years. . . . For ten years I have been testing, acidising . . . thing began to decompose under my very . . . at length brown, pulpy substance, such as you might . . . sultanas . . . Now comes in the curious part of the . . ."

The parodies in the book are mainly drawn from the files of the *Saturday Review,* though not from that particular number. In a Note at the beginning, Mr. Beerbohm tells us that the compositors of all our

higher-toned newspapers keep Stevenson's sentence about "playing the sedulous ape" set up in type always, "so constantly does it come tripping off the pens of all higher-toned reviewers." And he goes on to say that he acquired the habit "of aping, now and again, quite sedulously, this or that live writer—sometimes, it must be admitted, in the hope of learning rather what to avoid." And he finishes his note by saying: "The book itself may be taken as a sign that I think my own style is, at length, more or less formed."

Even an easy and obvious skit of a peculiar style may be clever and amusing, but there is much more than mere cleverness in these. Anybody with a knack for mimicry can exaggerate the salient eccentricities of an exceptional manner of writing, but in *A Christmas Garland* the parody is two-fold: the style and the method of construction is imitated, but not too grossly caricatured; and, better still, the treatment, apart from the actual subject of each story or essay—which is Christmas—is recognisable as the potential treatment of each separate victim. Mr. Beerbohm might be described as a devil who has temporarily possessed these writers, but he never burlesques them.

In *Some Damnable Errors about Christmas* Mr. G. K. Ch*st*rt*n is made to say:—

"If Euclid were alive to-day (and I dare say he is) . . ."; and later:

> We do not say of Love that he is short-sighted. We do not say of Love that he is myopic. We do not say of Love that he is astigmatic. We say quite simply, Love is blind. We might go further and say, Love is deaf. That would be

a profound and obvious truth. We might go further still and say, Love is dumb. But that would be a profound and obvious lie.

Mr. J*hn G*lsw*rthy tells a story where an old lady, Jacynth, sorely tempts her old husband on Christmas morning to feed the birds outside their window. He has to remember that " these sporadic doles can do no real good "—must even degrade the birds who receive them.

And *Fond Hearts Askew* is a beautiful title for a story by Mr. M**r*ce H*wl*tt.

To two of the branches in this Garland there are footnotes of apology which delightfully show the author's almost ingenuous anxiety not, in the first case, to hurt the susceptibilities of a living, and, in the second, to offer disrespect to a dead writer. And it is to be supposed that such footnotes are necessary, because not every one is alive to the fact that mockery and admiration for the same individual may go quite happily together hand in hand.

It has been said that *P.C. X.* 36 is unfair to Mr. R*dy*rd K*pl*ng, because it is a parody of an extremely various author's least pleasing manner, rather than of what may be called his average manner. But I cannot see that it is unfair. You might just as well say that it is unfair or in bad taste to caricature a man's big and ugly nose and not to exaggerate the sweetness of his smile. You might as well say, further, that the only fair course is to blend the bigness of the nose with the sweetness of the smile. If you are a caricaturist, you may do this, but you will pin your faith to the bigness

of the nose, if you believe that it is more truly representative than the sweet smile.

In the story of Police-Constable Judlip, Mr. K*pl*ng's trick of displaying technical knowledge in an acutely nonchalant fashion is delightfully counterfeited, so that to the general reader Mr. Beerbohm's nonsense seems just as right as Mr. Kipling's (no doubt) academical accuracies.

" Now when Judlip sighs the sound is like unto that which issues from the vent of a Crosby boiler when the cog-gauges are at 260° F."

Judlip, moreover, flashes " his 45-c.p. down the slot of a two-grade Yale."

In fact—is it nonsense ?

Judlip, again, is not so much a name that Mr. K*pl*ng might have chosen as the perfect name for a character that he might have invented. The " Police Station Ditty " does more than merely recall *B*rr*ck R**m B*ll*ds :*

> Then it's collar 'im tight,
> In the name of the Lawd !
> 'Ustle 'im, shake 'im till 'e's sick !
> Wot, 'e *would*, would 'e ? Well,
> Then yer've got ter give 'im 'Ell,
> An' it's trunch, trunch, truncheon does the trick.

There is no trifling (and perhaps temporary) insincerity of which an author may be guilty, for which Mr. Beerbohm fails to belabour him, though it is with a jester's bladder. The more intimately the reader is acquainted with the writings of the persons mocked in *A Christmas Garland* the more severe grows the strain

upon him in finding epithets of admiration for the parodies.

Visible from the window of the Wrackgarth's parlour was that colossal statue of Commerce which rears itself aloft at the point where Oodge Lane is intersected by Blackstead Street. Commerce, executed in glossy Doultonware by some sculptor or sculptors unknown, stands pointing her thumb over her shoulder towards the chimneys of far Hanbridge. When I tell you that the circumference of that thumb is six inches, and the rest to scale, you will understand that the statue is one of the prime glories of Bursley.

That is from *Scruts*, by Arn*ld B*nn*tt, and the last sentence altogether transcends parody.

Mr. H*l**re B*ll*c explains exactly how a wayfarer knocked at the door of an Inn.

Now the door was Oak. It had been grown in the forest of Boulevoise, hewn in Barre-le-Neuf, seasoned in South Hoxton, hinged nowhere in particular, and panelled—and that most abominably well—in Arque, where the peasants sell their souls for skill in such handicraft.

In discovering that " there never was a writer except Dickens " Mr. G**rge M**re is interpreted as saying : " There are moments when one does not think of girls, are there not, dear reader ? " and is made to take a mean advantage of that Miss Arabella who went skating with Mr. Winkle, by watching her climbing over a stile and noticing that she is knock-kneed.

The first parody in the book is of Henry James, but an earlier and more concentrated essence of that author's manner is to be found written, in Mr. Beerbohm's way, not under or over, but close about two

caricatures of him. In one of these Henry James is revisiting America.

> . . . so that, in fine, let, without further beating about the bush, me make to myself amazed acknowledgment that, but for the certificate of birth which I have, so very indubitably, *on* me, I might, in regarding, and, as it somewhat were, overseeing, *à l'œil de voyageur*, these dear good people, find hard to swallow, or even to take by subconscious injection, the great idea that I am—oh, ever so indigenously !—one of them.

" As it somewhat were . . ."

But these explicit occasions are not those only on which Mr. Beerbohm has slipped into step with this—I might almost say—with his—master.

In reading the stories and essays in *A Christmas Garland*, you are apt, sometimes, to forget that they are parodies in your present interest in their intrinsic qualities : and you find yourself judging them as stories, as essays, and are disappointed because some point is too laboriously set forth, some trick of rhythm over-strained : and on the heels of that disappointment you wake up from reading the story on its own merits, greatly relieved to remember that it is a skit. All art calls for self-sacrifice, for the stifling of happy but inappropriate impulses, for rigid selection, for ruthless rejection. But to art which deliberately spoils a good story in order to make it a better parody I make my profoundest bow.

VIII

PROBABLY nothing written about a living author has ever been so widely quoted as Mr. Shaw's introduction of Max Beerbohm to the readers of the *Saturday Review*. It was indeed at his express suggestion that the post of dramatic critic on that paper was offered to Mr. Beerbohm; a post which Mr. Shaw had held for four years. On May 21st, 1898, he wrote at the end of his "valedictory" message

"The younger generation is knocking at the door; and as I open it there steps spritely in the incomparable Max . . . For the rest let Max speak for himself. I am off duty for ever, and am going to sleep."

The incomparable . . . as my readers have seen, Mr. Beerbohm, though in a spirit of the utmost modesty, has even quoted that himself.

When his turn came to say good-bye twelve years later, he too sighed with relief.

> Is love of my readers as strong in me as hatred of my Thursdays? (Thursday, the eleventh hour, was the day on which he wrote his weekly article.) It is not half so strong. I feel extraordinarily light and gay in writing this farewell—at least, I shall as soon as I have finished it. And yet . . . habit is mighty; and habit . . . may yet make me envy my successor here. And you, by the same token, will miss me a little, for a little while?

He was a good critic, with the liveliest possible perceptions and the most sensitive appreciation of high

drama and fine acting. He hardly ever made impracticable demands; he was never priggish; never wilfully obscure; his generalisations were (generally) well-deserved.

In writing a modern play, an author feels bound to pay some kind of attention to probability, and tries (often failing) to make his characters seem human. In writing a period-play, however, he is apt to feel that such things are of no importance.

Odd as it may sound that may be taken quite literally and is profoundly true, just as it is very largely true of "period" novels. If there was one thing which, up to the publication of *And Even Now*, withheld from Max Beerbohm a high title to fame it was the fact that he, as indeed do so great a majority of us, hated to so much better purpose than he loved: and so the plays which he disliked provided for him more appropriate opportunities than those which he admired.

At the end of one week's contribution, which was, in fact, a "general" article he wrote:

P.S.—When I said that I had no play to write about this week, I forgot ——. The production was not indeed memorable. Enough that I saw it, that the audience seemed to be amused by it, and that I seemed not to be.

On another occasion:

I shall continue my visits to the Gaiety and the Shaftesbury, where the shows are good of their kind, giving the Savoy my best wishes and my widest berth.

"Plays about children written for adults," he said once, "I can tolerate. But plays about adults written for children are apt to bore me."

But there is little point in quoting from criticisms of plays which lost their "uptodation" (as he called it once) twenty years ago.

Before that Mr. Beerbohm had written for *To-morrow*—a magazine which ran through, amongst other things, the year 1896, and was edited by Mr. J. T. Grein. "Ex Cathedra," he reviewed books, and made observations about modern statuary and other matters which were subsequently dove-tailed together to make the essay *If I were Ædile*, in *More*.

In *The Idler* for May, 1898, just after the death of Aubrey Beardsley, he wrote in appreciative memory of the artist, and showed that he could form and express an opinion upon a given point without the smallest deviation from that point.

"He died," he wrote of Beardsley, "having achieved masterpieces, at an age when normal genius has as yet done little of which it will not be heartily ashamed hereafter."

And then, wanting to make sure of a fair hearing and being unable to avoid mention of the general attitude to Beardsley's drawings, he lets the public down as lightly as he can:

"Those who knew Beardsley only through his work imagined that he must be a man of somewhat forbidding character. His powerful, morbid fancy really repelled them, and to them the very beauty of its expression may have seemed a kind of added poison."

The facts could not have been more luminously epitomised.

He then proceeded to demolish the popular fallacy.

Not infrequently, throughout his career, he has derided other critics; though only once, as far as I can remember, on (his own) personal grounds. The instances given in this book show that he was in a position to do so; and, for his own part, he has and always had the faculty for discrimination.

Certain reviewers had impugned Beardsley's *technique:* and had fallen back on that old refuge of those who wish to combine spleen and *savoir faire* in art criticism, but don't know quite how to set about it,—"He can't draw."

I think, says Mr. Beerbohm, it was in the third number of the *Yellow Book* that two pictures by hitherto unknown artists were reproduced. One, a large head of Mantegna, by Philip Broughton; the other, a pastel-study of a French woman, by Albert Foschter. Both the drawings had rather a success with the reviewers, one of whom advised Beardsley "to study and profit by the sound and scholarly draughtsmanship of which Mr. Philip Broughton furnishes another example in his familiar manner." Beardsley, who had made both the drawings and invented both the signatures, was greatly amused and delighted.

In 1906 Mr. Beerbohm paid, on behalf of the *Daily Mail*, his first visit to Italy. And when, travelling by way of Switzerland, he saw "Ramiola" in large letters at a "mountain-crushed" station—"I had a vague notion," he says, "that it was the birthplace of Petrarch"; though in fact it turned out to be the name of a much advertised patent medicine.

Really the pith and character of these articles about Italy lies not so much in his descriptions of places and pictures, as in his attitude to sight-seeing. What he

wanted, he explained, was to see, not to have seen. Always a *connoisseur* of the finer shades of intellectual enjoyment, he fully understood the folly of " seeing the sights " to any extensive and deliberate degree. How much better, he seems to argue, it is just to take in what passes by. Mountains which come to Mahommet save a lot of walking. The fact is that English and American tourists cannot bear the thought of not seeing what they have paid and come a long distance to see : and, curiously, many of them, consciously or unconsciously, rather despise the pleasures that have not been paid for.

Mr. Beerbohm had heard a great deal about Padua, and thither he went from Venice. But he returned the next day, not out of any perversity in refusing to like what it was evidently the correct thing to like, but because he found Padua, even if it was the birthplace of Mantegna, oppressive and dull.

That Italian tour achieved nothing immediately remarkable for him as a writer, but it was then that he fell in love with the country and, not many years later, he settled there.

Before closing a somewhat perfunctory survey of Mr. Beerbohm's miscellaneous work—his odd jobs—I should give some account of his little play, *A Social Success*. This was first produced by Sir George Alexander at the Palace Theatre, in January, 1913, and was again performed, as a curtain-raiser, at the St. James's, a year later.

The Persons of the play were as follows :

Tommy Dixon. Aged 30, clean-shaven, debonair.

MAX AND WATER.
A Caricature by Bohun Lynch.

The Duchess of Huntingdon. Handsome, a widow, aged 40.

The Earl of Amersham. Full-bodied, sleek, red-faced man of 53. Fair hair turning grey, small fair moustache.

The Countess of Amersham. Pretty, romantic-looking woman of 29. Dark hair.

Edward Robbins. Three or four years older than Tommy, rather stiff and formal, long serious face, clean shaven.

Hawkins. Valet, acting as butler.

Tommy Dixon is so irresistible, is in such request, that his life is a burden to him. What he wants, he tells his friend Robbins, is "Tranquility, independence, quiet fun. Books—pipes——" But Society never leaves him alone—dances every night, more dinners than he can possibly eat, five-deep in luncheons every day. He has been growing more and more desperate. Hitherto he has seen no way out. People have been known to—emigrate, in order to avoid being killed by kindness, but Tommy can think of nothing really effective, binding, and final except to be caught cheating at cards. That is the one irremissible offence.

So the curtain goes up just before the hideous discovery. Lord Amersham is furious. "Sir!" he shouts in his rage, and Lady Amersham says, faintly, "Don't call him 'Sir.'"—which, such is the effect of a poignant moment upon the human sense of fitness, is, I believe, exactly what she would have said. In any case, Tommy has for the moment produced the desired result, and he is presently left alone with the prim

Robbins, who promptly tries to snatch away his glass of whiskey and soda under the impression that it must be arsenic. Then Tommy explains. Robbins is rather wistfully jealous of his old friend.

"Tommy—Tommy to every one," he says. "Nobody ever called me 'Ned.'"

"Is your name Edward?"

"There! After all these years! You didn't even know my Christian name."

"I knew your initial was E."

"You never called me E."

"E," says Tommy kindly.

"Thanks, old fellow."

Tommy goes on to explain what a life it is he has been made to lead.

> The married women, they don't want you to make love to them. But they want you to *want* to make love to them, all the time. And if they think you're making love to anyone else—or if they think anyone else is wanting you to want to—then there's a deuce of a row. . . .

But presently the Duchess rings up on the telephone to forgive him, and Lady Amersham returns in order to run away with him, only a few minutes before her husband dashes back to apologise for the hard things he has said. It is, after all, a wasted effort.

The little play is a very pleasing bit of nonsense, but in that last quotation one seems to catch an echo. In fact, that—that—that almost might not have been written by Max Beerbohm at all.

IX

Zuleika Dobson, or an Oxford Love Story, is the only long novel that Max Beerbohm has published. It was planned and partly written in the late 'nineties, though no doubt the new part was not added without a most scrupulous revision of the old. To be willing and able to continue writing a story at all dropped twelve or thirteen years before is, you say, remarkable evidence of the persistency with which Max Beerbohm had remained his old self. And yet it is only his old self's shadow in which the pages of *Zuleika Dobson* lurk. Like *Yet Again* the book belongs to the "transition period." Unlike *Yet Again* it is, rather than was, disappointing. Read when it first appeared, the beginning was so good that you read on and on to the end, buoyed up always in the hope that some twist of sudden inspiration, some turn of brilliantly conceived events would destroy the monotony of that long journey down the last two-thirds of the story. And every now and again there was a flower to pick by the way, and at the end of all what seems to be a most praiseworthy thistle. And such was the virtue of that ending that you allowed it to make too much weight in summing up the whole. In later readings you remember that the ending though a characteristic and extreme refinement of satire is only a thistle's down after all; and though you will reach it again you will

do so, I am afraid, by quicker means than you, bred upon the principles of Euclid, had thought possible.

Zuleika Dobson must be measured in half a dozen different dimensions. First of all, and when all's said most important, it must be judged as a story. It is not really a good story. All the undergraduates of Oxford throw themselves into the river and drown partly for the love of Zuleika but partly because a duke sets the example. Mr. Beerbohm has been accused of doubtful taste in so satirising wholesale suicide, but I doubt if his taste would have been called in question if the satire had been a better one, wider in view, fuller-blooded in treatment. It lacks gusto, and that very lack seems somehow to create an impression of cruelty, which, as we know, may be in the best of taste. Then, in part, the book is a general skit of various other novelists who have written about Oxford; and is in that respect as good as so general a skit can be. It is a satire on Oxford itself, on every aspect of Oxford, town and gown. In that it is brilliant but unfair: for, on the whole, the snobbery of undergraduates is travestied in the wrong direction. It is a history, every word of which is invented, but of which every other word is essentially true. As a study of character it outstrips realism and enters into the innermost realm of genuine art. For Zuleika herself is not typical though she may recall a certain type. You may call her an excellent caricature of "the modern young woman." But she is much more than that. She is Woman—and "modern" be hanged. The story parodies the high and ancient truth that the worthiest of men are prone to throw them-

selves away for the sake of utterly worthless women. The early chapters recall Max Beerbohm in almost every phase and find for him fresh pasture as well—notably in that quadrangle of Judas College called Salt Cellar. For he has invented a history of this college, which has the very breath of exuberant authenticity. (Regarding the antiquity of his own old college, however, he stubbornly supports, though not here, an erroneous view.)

It is difficult to quote, because quotations imply gems, and the early chapters of *Zuleika Dobson*, without the tiresome glitter which becomes a weariness is a mine of them: and it is better to keep to the representative turns of thought. The first quotation, however, shows the author merely dodging the conventions.

> Zuleika was not strictly beautiful. Her eyes were a trifle large, and their lashes longer than they need have been. An anarchy of small curls was her chevelure, a dark upland of misrule, every hair asserting its rights over a not discreditable brow. For the rest, her features were not at all original . . . The mouth was a mere replica of Cupid's bow, lacquered scarlet and strung with the littlest pearls. No apple-tree, no wall of peaches, had not been robbed, nor any Tyrian rose-garden, for the glory of Miss Dobson's cheeks. Her neck was imitation-marble. Her hands and feet were of very mean proportions.

This young woman had been allowed owing to some accident of appearance and personality, to seat herself with the calmest assurance upon a pinnacle of fame, the immediate excuse for which was an indifferent conjuring entertainment. This is the account of her first performance:

Her repertory was, it must be confessed, old and obvious ; but the children, in deference to their hostess, pretended not to know how the tricks were done, and assumed their prettiest airs of wonder and delight . . . In fact, the whole thing went off splendidly. The hostess was charmed, and told Zuleika that a glass of lemonade would be served to her in the hall.

In every country that she visited the men went mad for her. She was the inspiration of the New York Press :

Zuleika Dobson walking on Broadway in the sables gifted her by the Grand Duke Salamander Salamandrovitch . . . she says, " You can bounce blizzards in them " ; Zuleika Dobson yawning over a love-letter from Millionaire Edelweiss ; relishing a cup of clam-broth, she says, " They don't use clams out there " ; . . . starting for the musicale given in her honour by Mrs. Suetonius X. Meistersinger, the most exclusive woman in New York ; chatting at the telephone to Miss Camille Van Spook, the best-born girl in New York ; laughing over the recollection of a compliment made her by George Abimelech Post, the best-groomed man in New York.

The hero of this novel is the young Duke of Dorset, of whose feet it is said : " So slim and long were they, of instep so nobly arched, that only with a pair of glazed ox-tongues on a breakfast table were they comparable."

Sweat, Mr. Beerbohm tells us, started from the brows of the Emperors, whose busts intersperse the railings of the Sheldonian, as Zuleika Dobson drove by ; and he goes on to talk of those Emperors, asking—are they now too little punished, after all, for their infamous misdeeds ?

Exposed eternally and inexorably to heat and frost, to the four winds that lash them and the rains that wear them away, they are expiating, in effigy, the abominations of their pride and cruelty and lust. Who were lechers, they are without bodies; who were tyrants, they are crowned never but with crowns of snow.

And, as if that wasn't enough:

Who made themselves even with the gods, they are by American visitors frequently mistaken for the Twelve Apostles.

The origin of this story, Mr. Beerbohm says, must be ascribed to Clio—no less a person. She was bored, it appears, by all the history books she had to read.

Some of the mediæval chronicles she rather liked. But when, one day, Pallas asked her what she thought of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" her only answer was ὅστις τοῖα ἔχει ἐν ἡδονῇ ἔχει ἐν ἡδονῇ τοῖα (For people who like that kind of thing, that is the kind of thing they like).

And later: "It occurred to her how fine a thing history might be if the historian had the novelist's privileges." And as she evidently had Mr. Beerbohm's works ἐν ἡδονῇ, she pressed him into her service. In that way, mobile but invisible, he was able to see all that happened to each of his characters.

There are indeed many happy things in *Zuleika Dobson*, but they seldom form an inextricable and inevitable part of the novel. And it is as a novel that the book must be regarded; and a novel, even when its incidents are fantastic, and remote from possible human experience, is not good just because it is "full

of good things." It must be judged as a whole. As a whole the book would be infinitely better if it were pitilessly abridged. The interminable introspections of the Duke during his last day of life perceptibly hover on the border line between wild extravagance and realism. And when he inclines to human truth the Duke is not a character in a novel at all: he is merely thinking little essays for Mr. Beerbohm to write.

As a whole we might call *Zuleika Dobson* an essay "On Suicide Considered as a Social Accomplishment" because it does emphatically challenge comparison with *Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts*. And de Quincey succeeded in one of the ways in which Mr. Beerbohm did not. He was not nearly so "brilliant" as Mr. Beerbohm: there are few gems in the essay on Murder. But with consistently high spirits the consideration of murder is kept lightly satirical.

'I will *not* be murdered,' the baker shrieks. 'What for will I lose my precious throat?' 'What for?' said I; 'if for no other reason, for this—that you put alum into your bread. But no matter, alum or no alum . . . know that I am a virtuoso in the art of murder—am desirous of improving myself in its details—and am enamoured of your vast surface of throat, to which I am determined to be a customer.'

There is nothing in the least horrible about that, nor in the connoisseurs' discussion of Thurtell.—"'Well! will *this* do?' 'Is *this* the right thing?' 'Are you satisfied at last?'"—exactly as though they were talking over Mr. Beerbohm's latest exhibition of caricatures.

Murder in de Quincey's hand is no more terrible than an amateur violinist's *obbligato*. Mr. Beerbohm, on the other hand, does not really win one over to the belief that suicide is rather a lark.

But, at the very end of all, Zuleika, her thirst for admiration in no wise slaked by her conquest of all the undergraduates of Oxford who have drowned themselves for love of her, orders a special train to Cambridge. And that culmination, despite the difficulty of its approach, is managed with such perfect lightness, so matter-of-fact an air, that until a little time has passed, and you remember, and you look again, you allow it to overbalance all the quite serious short-comings which led up to it.

X

If Mr. Beerbohm failed partially in writing a long novel he abundantly atoned for it in the five stories collected under the title of *Seven Men.* (One of the stories deals with two men, and a friend of mine keeps a register of the people who ask for the identity of the seventh.) When Max Beerbohm wrote these stories, which were published in book form in 1919, he had definitely made the transition referred to regarding *Yet Again* and *Zuleika Dobson*, and he had passed that point mentioned earlier where, as I put it, the apple-tree began to bear fruit, and where Mr. Holbrook Jackson's account of him becomes (as no one will appreciate more readily than Mr. Jackson himself) obsolete.

Mr. Beerbohm had ceased to be, as he had once called himself, a dilettante, a *petit-maître;* he had dropped some, not all, of his flippancy, and had begun to take himself, and life, seriously. But that is not to say that he had changed, except along his own lines. Because an author expresses genuine feeling, allows scope to the humanity in him, he does not suffer, or should not, the reproach of being called earnest. And that word, as commonly used to-day is, in regard to fiction, a very terrible reproach. For we mean by "earnestness" in artistic writing that seriousness which is set forth not only without humour but which makes manifest the impossibility of there being a sense of humour behind the sense of importance. Earnest-

ness is an inalienable and indispensable quality of propaganda, of the sermon, of edification generally.

Only in one story of *Seven Men* appears the better seriousness, so veiled as not to be recognised by everyone accustomed to the author's past treatment of emotion. It will be, rather, the people who come to read *Seven Men* before the earlier books and who make it the subject of an unprejudiced assay, who will immediately put a right valuation upon the story of James Pethel.

Really *James Pethel* is not a story, nor is *Savonarola Brown*. The first of these is a sketch of a queer and wistful man, genially reckless of his own safety, but abominably reckless where others are concerned. It is not quite realistic—some of the points in Pethel's very subtle character are necessarily exaggerated in order that they may be fully understood. The finest shades of actual character do not always make a good story, especially when that story is a short one. The same rule, more robustly applied, holds good also for the stage. Not very long ago an actor was admonished by a critic for pulling up his trousers at the knee as he sat down during an emotional crisis of the play. The critic observed that a man in such circumstances would not have thought about the possible bagginess of his trousers. So far the critic was quite literally right. But what he really wanted to say was that the man would not in fact have pulled at his trousers, thought or no thought. And there, in intention, he was wrong. In life, it does not need intense agitation to wipe out the consciousness of an action which by habit has be-

come purely instinctive. Whatever the man's rapture or his agony he would not have failed to pull at his trousers. But though to do so on the stage was strictly realistic it looked, nevertheless, slightly ridiculous. And an actor cannot afford to look ridiculous in an emotional crisis. He must in short do something wrong in order to be convincing. James Pethel would have done and would not have done many things in life which he had to do and had not to do in his story.

Brown, christened *Ladbroke* because his people lived in the Crescent of that name, was nicknamed *Savonarola* by Mr. Beerbohm because he wrote a play—or four acts of it—about that monk. He was knocked over and killed by a motor-omnibus and Mr. Beerbohm, acting as his literary executor, gives us the four acts and a scenario, made out by himself, of the fifth.

When we know that the persons of the play include Lucrezia Borgia, S. Francis of Assisi, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante, and Machiavelli we are more inclined to call it a *revue*.

In Act iv. Savonarola speaks:

> . . . what would my sire have said,
> And what my dam, had anybody told them
> The time would come when I should occupy
> A felon's cell? O the disgrace of it!—
> The scandal, the incredible come-down!
> . . . I see in my mind's eye
> The public prints—'Sharp Sentence on a Monk.'

Later, Cesare Borgia says:

> Lo! 'tis none other than the fool that I
> Hoof'd from my household but two hours agone.

This, after pages of pseudo-Elizabethan.

The effective trick of using in this sort of way modern phraseology recalls little Mr. Æneas, the mask-maker's, tradesman's English in *The Happy Hypocrite.*

" I want the mask of a saint," Lord George Hell says to him.

" Mask of a saint, my lord ? Certainly ! With or without halo ? "

Indeed, again and again, throughout *Seven Men,* as well as *And Even Now,* we catch echoes of Max Beerbohm's earliest work, or, more exactly, since echoes die away,—our memories are jogged. And the old nonsense remains, though allusion is more deft.

Of the three genuine stories in this book, *Hilary Maltby and Stephen Braxton* is an account of two rival novelists who run neck to neck in social as in literary triumphs until Maltby goes definitely ahead by being asked to spend a week-end at the Duchess of Hertfordshire's house, Keeb.

Maltby had written *Ariel in Mayfair,* Braxton *A Faun on the Cotswolds.* " From the time of Nathaniel Hawthorne," says Mr. Beerbohm, " to the outbreak of the war, current literature did not suffer from any lack of fauns."

The chief points of the story are the appearance of a living man's ghost, and the catalogue of the woes which betide Maltby : cutting himself whilst shaving, spilling thick soup upon a white waistcoat. I mention these particular accidents because they are the things or the sort of things which have been so often and so inelegantly dealt with by " humorous " writers, dealt with

in a sort of way that not only fails to make you laugh even against your will but that kindles in you the hottest shame. I should not like to say that Mr. Beerbohm chose such incidents just in order to show what could be done with them, because that would argue a plight of mind in him which he would probably repudiate, but he has very effectually shown that a popularly comic subject may be treated in a very delectable manner.

But "pleasant little Maltby" gets very little satisfaction out of his preferment. In the first place his conscience vexes him because a hint from him to the Duchess at an Annual Soirée of the Inkwomen's Club has prevented her from inviting Braxton also; and because at Keeb, he is tormented by the sight at the most unfortunate turns of "not actual Braxton but, roughly speaking, Braxton."

Amongst the other guests at Keeb Hall were Mr. A. J. Balfour, Mr. Henry Chaplin, and M. de Soveral. Mr. Balfour even takes a small part in the action of the story. . . .

There are about five living actors who can be deliberately vulgar on the stage without offending you; you will forgive two or three people of your acquaintance for no matter *what* they may say in front of *any*body. It is because they have a way with 'em. But not every one can, so to speak, wear a billycoke hat upon one side. And it is the same here. If Mr. Beerbohm introduced *you*, illustrious reader, into a story, you wouldn't mind.

In the first story of this book, *Enoch Soames*, Mr. Beerbohm gives a speaking and important part to an

old friend, much caricatured by him in return for many enlightened portraits (nor will the work of both in respect of each other be found lacking amongst the illustrations of this book). Not only is the beginning of the story autobiographical, but it does incidentally for the 'nineties, more by allusion than by direct statement, very much what the essay *1880* sets out to do for that year. It reproduces the literary and a little of the social climate of that decade in such a way that time seems to become fluid, rolling back and exposing old rocks and, more especially, old houses built upon the sand. Indeed, repetition, by no means in the adverse sense, is to be found whenever the reader takes a comprehensive view of Max Beerbohm's work from 1894 to the present day.

In retrospect men love best to linger in the days when they first emerged into "freedom"—manhood: and Max Beerbohm and his contemporaries go back and live again and again in the clover of the 'nineties. It was their Golden Age.

But since Mr. Beerbohm has seen fit to pour scorn, by implication and with apology, upon Enoch Soames, and has, in doing so, rather endeared to us that futile and foolish person (because the glamour of that golden past is upon his writing), I do hope that one day, when this and the encompassing years shall have sunk so far into the background that only their outstanding virtues, their salient absurdities shall be remembered,—I do hope that Mr. Beerbohm will concoct another story about them. But perhaps I oughtn't to wish it, because it will be about a time which, though it has gold

for him, will not have the glitter of that remoter past: and into that story, which I want against my better judgment, he could not put the heart which beats in *Enoch Soames.*

It may be as well to correct a rather general impression that "Enoch Soames" is a portrait. He is not. How far people will fetch impressions of that kind is perpetually amazing to writers of fiction. Mrs. Mordaunt received, after the publication of her delightful book, *Simpson,* a letter from a man of that name in Guatemala or Tai-o-hae, asking her, in no spirit of offence where none was meant, how she knew that his sister had suffered from whooping-cough at the age of twelve, or something of that nature. That is one extreme. But every day there are heart-burnings in country towns where once a novelist has spent a holiday. "I suppose we shall all be in your next book?" And they are—at least they are acutely scandalised to find themselves there. And yet were every possibility of their identities excluded, were the scene not a country town in East Anglia, but the island of—say—Malecula in the New Hebrides, and all the characters either cannibals or missionaries, how briskly fanned would seem the flames that burnt those hearts!

Still, it is preposterous to suppose that all—even greatly distinguished—authors actually create their characters, making them up entirely out of their heads; or if they do it is because their heads are choc-a-bloc with memories and observations. The persons who seem to be at all real in books are, consciously or not, "composite portraits." Half a dozen people may have

Mr. Charles Conder.
A Caricature by Max.

contributed their quota, as well as the author his imagination, to *Enoch Soames;* and the result is the "prize" zany of the 'nineties.

This is one of Soames' poems:

To a Young Woman.

Thou art, who hast not been!
Pale tunes irresolute
And traceries of old sounds
Blown from a rotted flute
Mingle with noise of cymbals rouged with rust,
Nor not strange forms and epicene
Lie bleeding in the dust,
Being wounded with wounds.

For this it is
That in thy counterpart
Of age-long mockeries
Thou hast not been nor art!

"There seemed to me," writes Mr. Beerbohm, "a certain inconsistency as between the first and last lines of this."

There seems to me, say I, a very remarkable consistency as between this poem and certain others of the period that one may still find, with difficulty, by zig-zagging across the Charing Cross Road, and searching the trays outside the windows of second-hand book-shops. There have been many excellent, but rollicking, burlesques of that sort of thing: but this is true parody and the difference is plain.

For sheer neatness and ingenuity, the plot of this story surpasses anything else that Mr. Beerbohm has written. In it he has built up for himself the most

complicated difficulties, each one of which in the blandest manner and with the clearest head he overcomes. But how he kept his head in resolving so tangled a skein will be the wonder of any writer who has ever involved himself in a plot of far less intricacy: but the result for the reader is singularly felicitous, for almost a child could follow him.

At the end the author relates how, in the Rue d'Antin in Paris, he nodded and smiled at the Devil (who is appropriately given a princely but darkling share in the action of the story); and the Devil stares at him without recognition.

"To be cut—deliberately cut—by *him!* I was, I still am, furious at having had that happen to me."

A very awkward sentence—uncomfortable, and difficult to say? Intentionally so. It is another instance of the self-sacrifice involved in good art, and a very great self-sacrifice to a stylist such as Mr. Beerbohm. But nothing short of that triumphant dissonance would quite have conveyed the sense of childish petulance which is here required.

Certainly the full enjoyment of this record of an ineffectual and decadent poet desiderates some familiarity with the period, and it is hard to say how, without that familiarity—even at second hand—the story would strike one. But that is not to say that its interest is ephemeral. If we acclaim the best stories in the language those which are independent of period, locality, class, morals, and religion, we must be careful not to exclude a tale that derives much additional enchantment from one at least of these shifting values.

XI

For how long can Max Beerbohm persist in choosing the title for his volumes of essays from the same pedigree? *The Works, More, Yet Again, And Even Now,*—and there occurs to me, but there! Mr. Beerbohm would not thank me for offering a suggestion which, however unsound, would yet diminish the number of original alternatives that remains to him.

Criticism, both professional and conversational, of *And Even Now*, taking its cue from the book's contents, is remarkably diverse. Some people are disappointed with Mr. Beerbohm's loss of flippancy and think that he has become heavy-handed and commonplace; some believing that he has become commonplace are pleased on that account; and some again hold that there is nothing commonplace at all, nor heavy, nor can be in anything that he sees fit to write, but that he has become mellow and kindlier than he used to be, remaining the individual he always was.

In this book of twenty essays there are several that are obviously "characteristic": they are what the critics of the first category expected and hoped for. But if we read diligently between the lines of the earlier work we shall come to see that the same character is in all of them. There is certainly nothing commonplace in his treatment of the human emotions. People mean more to him, one might say, than they used to; things less.

About " things " in this book he does come near, now and again, to being—usual. But people, I think, have always meant much to him : only as a younger man he did not like to say so. Now he is a little less reserved. Young men and women generally like to appear much harder than they feel—at least I hope that is the explanation of them. Even to his humanity—as where he tells us of the love of kindly people for one another and his love for them—he brings his own peculiar sensitiveness. And fine feelings are of greater moment when delicately expressed than plain observation, be it never so acute, can ever be.

" I am so glad," an old friend of Max Beerbohm said after the publication of *And Even Now*, " I am so glad that he has at last made a few platitudes—the sort of things he used to jeer at me for saying."

I knew what he meant perfectly well,—only, of course, they are not platitudes, but eternal verities very nicely put.

" Some writers," Mr. Beerbohm himself said in his farewell contribution to the *Saturday Review*, " have a dread of platitudes. I have not."

" Dread " is certainly rather a violent word, to be used only with circumspection. Children who do not quite like going to bed in the dark may not actually dread doing so : but they manage to avoid it. Mr. Beerbohm has generally managed to avoid platitude.

In the essay *On Speaking French* the matter of what he has to say has certainly been " used " pretty often.

" I would recommend that every boy, on reaching the age of sixteen should be hurled across the Channel

into the midst of some French family and kept there for six months."

You, reader of the third category, did not think Max Beerbohm capable of giving advice so well-worn as that. I think too that he was well aware of what he was doing, but wanting to say just that, nevertheless, relieved his feelings by humorous violence of expression—" hurled across the Channel." He must have reckoned up, half-consciously maybe, that the schoolboy exuberance of that word partly atoned for the obviousness of the statement. To " hurl " across the channel is, after all, a sort of euphemism. That, again, is immediately redeemed by the old manner:

" At the end of that time let him be returned to his school, there to make up for lost time. Time well lost, though. . . ."

And speaking of speaking French in Victorian days he had already said:

> To speak French fluently and idiomatically and with a good accent—or an idiom and accent which to our rough islanders *seemed* good—was rather a suspect accomplishment, being somehow deemed incompatible with civic worth.

The essay *How Shall I Word it?* was in part published in the *Saturday Review* in 1910, under the title *The Complete Letter-Writer*. It is, for him, just in the least degree obvious. Topsy-turveydom of any kind seldom quite fails to amuse us, but the mere concoction of well-worded rude letters where polite ones are expected, though they are the greatest possible fun in real life, in an essay by Max Beerbohm are exceptionable.

Years ago, in his essay on *Ouida*, Mr. Beerbohm referred to the " dullards who think that criticism consists in spotting mistakes." Nevertheless, bearing that well in mind, it is quite interesting to observe that the first line of his first book records one mistake while *And Even Now* contains more than one.

" How very delightful Grego's drawings are ! " he begins the essay on *Dandies and Dandies*. Grego never made any. In *Hosts and Guests* he refers to the Palazzo Borghese, using the word as though, instead of being the over-furnished " mansion " of a rich burgess, it had something to do with the Borgia family. And if the portrait of Goethe by Tischbein hangs now in the Museum at Frankfort, to which institution it was left by one of the German Rothschilds who bought it in 1840,—the essay, *Quia Imperfectum*, in which he tells us that the picture was lost, still remains a most ingenious reconstruction of a notable period in the lives of two notable men.

It is in that same essay that he makes a distinction both wise and witty between vanity and conceit.

> Such fame throughout Europe had Goethe won by his works that it was necessary for him to travel incognito. Not that his identity wasn't an open secret, nor that he himself would have wished it hid. Great artists are always vain. To say that a man is vain means merely that he is pleased with the effect he produces on other people. A conceited man is satisfied with the effect he produces on himself.

Such is the infirmity of human nature that it is seldom that a good and conscientious writer can please

the general reader on general and personal grounds. Stupid writers, or clever but dishonest ones, owe much of their popularity to the plausible way in which they vindicate the nobility of their readers. Really virtuous people who, of course, are not very certain about their virtue do like to be assured in an agreeable and convincing way that there is some good in them : and there is no villain so cynical but derives some kind of inward glow at discovering in a book that he is not such a bad fellow after all.

So it is with the lesser frailties. The reader of Mr. Beerbohm's essay, who had been privately and miserably conscious that he was a conceited ass, suddenly finds a loophole for escape in the testimony of an unimpeachable witness. It is easy to satisfy yourself that you are not satisfied merely with your own self-satisfaction.

On the other hand Max Beerbohm has a trick of amusing spitefulness directed against the reader which is capitally exemplified in the essay *In Homes Unblest.* These are the old railway coaches which are carted down to the seaside and, raised up above the ground, are (as he puts it) " bejezebelled " with paint and converted into cottages. As an alternative he commends the idea of a caravan.

" Think," he says, " of the white road and the shifting hedgerows, and the counties that you will soon lose count of. And think what a blessing it will be for you to *know* that your house is not the one in which the Merstham Tunnel murder was committed."

I am so glad that I can make a gruesome and appro-

priate retort: for the proofs of this book will almost certainly be corrected in just such a railway-carriage-cottage as he describes, and I am alarmedly uncertain about its origin.

I have a friend who spends each winter on the Riviera di Levante, and who has studied the history of that locality. What if I could tell Mr. Beerbohm that his own house is built upon the site of the workshop of Niccola of Zoagli, nicknamed "The Pock-marked," a noted manufacturer in the fifteenth century of racks, thumb-screws, and other instruments of well-considered torture?

Again we find a little justifiable flattery for the reader in *Hosts and Guests*. There Mr. Beerbohm contends that he is, by nature, himself a guest, and he makes a terrible confession about his own boyhood in support of his theory.

> In my school, as in most others, we received now and again 'hampers' from home . . . It was customary for the receiver of a hamper to share the contents with his mess-mates. On one occasion I received, instead of the usual variegated hamper, a box containing twelve sausage-rolls. It happened that when this box arrived and was opened by me there was no one around. Of sausage-rolls I was particularly fond. I am sorry to say that I carried the box up to my cubicle, and, having eaten two of the sausage-rolls, said nothing to my friends, that day, about the other ten, nor anything about them when, three days later, I had eaten them all—all, up there, alone.

Though the chance that the story as here related may meet the eyes of some of his school-fellows does not trouble him, he is glad that "there was no collec-

tive and contemporary judgment by them . . . What defence could I have offered? Suppose I had said 'You see, I am so essentially a guest,' the plea would have carried little weight."

And he goes on to explain that the plea was not worthless, because "on receipt of a hamper, a boy did rise, always, in the esteem of his mess-mates . . . With those twelve sausage-rolls, I could have dominated my fellows for a while. But I had not a dominant nature . . . Having received a hamper, I was always glad when it was finished, glad to fall back into the ranks."

And what "essential guest" will fail to derive comfort from Mr. Beerbohm's experiences as a host:

> Somewhere in the back of my brain, while I tried to lead the conversation brightly, was always the haunting fear that I had not brought enough money in my pocket. I never let this fear master me. I never said to any one 'Will you have a liqueur?'—always 'What liqueur will you have?'

This is not a reticent age, and (as with the fauns referred to by Max Beerbohm in the story of *Maltby and Braxton*) current literature suffers from no lack of confession. Is it to be regretted that the avowals of the day are of so different a gauge as these? On the whole, no. The pleasures of contrast are not to be dispensed with.

Perhaps in *And Even Now* there is a little less of that inextricability of style and wit which was so inherent a quality in the early books, but we still find that deft allusiveness which to the student of Max Beerbohm

is analogous to the " skin " of old mahogany which so thrills the more materialistic connoisseur.

Still writing of *Hosts and Guests*, Mr. Beerbohm shows us that to offer hospitality, and to accept it

> is but an instinct which man has acquired in the long course of self-development. Lions do not ask one another to their lairs, nor do birds keep open nest. Certain wolves and tigers, it is true, have been so seduced by man from their natural state that they will deign to accept man's hospitality. But when you give a bone to your dog, does he run out and invite another dog to share it with him ?—and does your cat insist on having a circle of other cats around her saucer of milk ? Quite the contrary . . . Thousands of years hence they may have acquired some willingness to share things with their friends. Or rather, dogs may; cats, I think, not. Meanwhile, let us not be censorious. Though certain monkeys assuredly were of finer and more malleable stuff than any wolves or tigers, it was a very long time indeed before even we began to be hospitable.

That quotation serves two purposes. The allusion, and the workmanship which prepares us for it, are most happy, and the mock-sententiousness recalls passages of *The Happy Hypocrite*, and even of *The Works*.

XII

Some sort of a review of Max Beerbohm's latest phase has been intentionally postponed till the last. When an author is witty—let us say, merely witty—one need have no compunction in trying to dissect his method. But to pry into his innermost feelings, especially when those feelings, so far as his writings go, have been bottled up for so long, seems, though quite relevant, almost grossly personal and presumptuous. And yet a *reconnaissance* of that nature is to some extent unavoidable if we are to see at all the foreground in the 'perspective.' And with that apology in advance, I proceed to pull up a corner of *The Golden Drugget.*

This essay, though published in *Land and Water* during the summer of 1919, was written in war-time. Mr. Beerbohm gave that name—*The Golden Drugget*—to the light which streams on dark nights from the open door of a wayside inn.

By daylight, on the way down from my little home to Rapallo, or up from Rapallo home, I am indeed hardly conscious that this view exists. By moonlight, too, it is negligible. Stars are rather unbecoming to it. But on a thoroughly dark night, when it is manifest as nothing but a strip of yellow light cast across the road from an ever-open door, great always is its magic for me. Is ? I mean *was.* But then, I mean also *will be.* And so I cleave to the present tense—the nostalgic present, as grammarians might call it.

And

There it is, familiar, serene, festal. That the pilgrim knew he would see it in due time does not diminish for him the queer joy of seeing it.

The first words of the essay somewhat prepare the reader for what is coming:

Primitive and essential things have great power to touch the heart of the beholder. I mean such things as a man ploughing a field, or sowing or reaping; a girl filling a pitcher from a spring; a young mother with her child; a fisherman mending his nets; a light from a lonely hut on a dark night.

And then, before reverently approaching the Golden Drugget itself, he explores some of the motives of modern art.

Brown's Ode to the Steam Plough, Jones' Sonnet Sequence on the Automatic Reaping Machine, and Robinson's Epic of the Piscicidal Dynamo, leave unstirred the deeper depths of emotion in us. The subjects chosen by these three great poets do not much impress us when we regard them *sub specie æternitatis*. Smith has painted nothing more masterly than his picture of a girl turning a hot-water tap. But has he *never* seen a girl fill a pitcher from a spring?

Before that he had pointed out that

Nature is interesting only because of *us*. And the best symbols of us are such sights as I have just mentioned—sights unalterable by fashion of time or place, sights that in all countries always were and never will not be.

(In passing, I would draw attention to the author's effective use of two negatives—which in the school-

room we were taught to despise as merely "making an affirmative.")

For a few lines, before he comes to Brown's Ode, he wanders for a little up a side-path of his theme—the "materials which are necessary to mankind's present pitch of glory."

> Is our modern way of life so great a success that mankind will surely never be willing to let it lapse? . . . We smile already at the people of the early nineteenth century who thought that the vistas opened by applied science were very heavenly. We have travelled far along those vistas. Light is *not* abundant in them, is it?

There is throughout this essay a sense, which the most careful readers of Max Beerbohm had never observed before, of simple and definite distress—the sadness of a man who has been, by the chances of warfare, long separated from his home.

"Is? I mean *was*. But then, I mean also *will be*." That was written by some one hoping almost against hope. But the hope was fulfilled, and now as then, years ago, the Golden Drugget is spread across the road.

"I pause to bathe in the light that is as the span of our human life, granted between one great darkness and another."

Besides a hint here and there of the more accessible emotions, of love and kindliness, of sheer joy and of sadness, there is in this book more than one trace of a sort of dismay—the consternation of the author, springing less from the actual trend of things than from an acknowledged inability to adapt himself to that

trend. He shrinks, not, as we have seen, from the substitution of the spring for the hot-water tap, but from the uncouth world (in which no one will want to paint either springs or hot-water taps) which he fears that it is going to be and which, if logical development can in no wise be avoided, it will be.

The genuine pathos, the "honest sentiment," as we say of other people, grows deeper still in the story of *William and Mary*, not without, however, the adornment and relief of the old persisting sense of what is ludicrous. Mr. Beerbohm has shown throughout this book that he is more than a satirist. He never ceases to be, besides, in the unblemished sense of the word, a critic.

There is in *William and Mary* real beauty. And that is the best we can ever say of anything. Amongst all the words expressive of delight that may be used about his written work, "beauty" is not one that can be profusely exercised. (His caricatures have a special beauty of their own, but from them the uttermost significance of the word must be withheld.)

In this story he talks, quietly and at first amusingly, about an old acquaintance who became a friend. Still in his personal way, he represents William as having been up with him at Oxford—"I can see him now . . ." That is a phrase that comes to the tip of many tongues, nearly always in regret for some remote past: and I cannot imagine it being used by any one who has not somewhere in his heart a soft place.

Certainly, you say, but why make so much of it? And I answer that to make much of it is necessary

because so much more has been made of Max Beerbohm's flippancy, of his wit, of his past refusal to take himself seriously: so many people regard him still as a *poseur*, and a jester,—the critics especially. And as has been said they are disappointed with him because he has developed. The fact is that critics (not only in the professional sense) are of two kinds—those who cannot bear to be made to feel and also cynically mistrust *all* emotion as being "commonplace"; and those who welcome any emotion, however insipid or mawkish, provided that it comes from the bottom of a heart unsullied by the smallest speck of discernment. Mr. Beerbohm is a writer of very great intelligence, and quite a large number of people are furious with him because he now turns out to be, besides, an obviously sympathetic writer, with human tendernesses—just like yours and mine?

His culminating point as a substantial writer is the essay, in *And Even Now*, called *No. 2, The Pines*. As a small contribution to biography it is, I think, rather widely acknowledged to stand alone. It is an account of the author's visits to that solid, respectable, Victorian, comfortable, matter-of-fact, unchangeable, humdrum, sacred house at Putney where Swinburne and Watts-Dunton lived together.

Enthusiasm and zest had not hitherto overflowed in Mr. Beerbohm's work. He had not, as a rule, written about things which called for much enthusiasm and vigour. Once again—"My gifts are small." He had been quiet, had not dealt in any kind of violence. But of Algernon Swinburne he is an idolater.

Early in the essay he suggests without defining his own attitude to poetry—" The essential Swinburne," he says, " is still the earliest " : and a page later : " Not philosophy, after all, not humanity, just sheer joyous power of song, is the primal thing in poetry." And when we think of the desert of verse in which there is no power, no joy, nothing sheer of any kind save imbecility—a desert flecked, certainly, with oases, but all told dreary and barren,—we do turn very thankfully indeed—don't we ?—to *An Interlude* and to *The Garden of Proserpine.*

But Max Beerbohm is ever independent. He is not afraid of chuckling at the idol's expense.

> The Boers, I remember, were the theme of a sonnet which embarrassed even their angriest enemies in our midst. He likened them, if I remember rightly, to ' hell-hounds foaming at the jaws.' This was by some people taken as a sign that he had fallen away from that high generosity of spirit which had once been his. To me it meant merely that he thought of poor little England writhing under the heel of an alien despotism, just as, in the days when he really was interested in such matters, poor little Italy had writhen. I suspect, too, that the first impulse to write about the Boers came not from the Muse within, but from Theodore Watts-Dunton without . . . ' Now, Algernon, we're at war, you know, at war with the Boers. I don't want to bother you at all, but I do think, my dear old friend, you oughtn't to let slip this opportunity of,' etc., etc.

And this affectionate, this gentlest raillery seems to us, wise after the event, indispensable to an appreciation of the two old friends.

Watts-Dunton always had " a great deal of work on hand just now."

Riverside Scene.

"Algernon Swinburne taking his great new friend Gosse to see Gabriel Rossetti."

A Caricature by Max.

I used to wonder what the work was, Mr. Beerbohm tells us, for he published little enough. But I never ventured to inquire, and indeed rather cherished the mystery: it was a part of the dear little old man; it went with the something gnome-like about his swarthiness and chubbiness—went with the shaggy hair that fell over the collar of his eternally crumpled frock-coat, the shaggy eyebrows that overhung his bright little brown eyes, the shaggy moustache that hid his small round chin.

And of his first meeting with Swinburne:

In shaking his hand, I bowed low, of course—a bow *de cœur;* and he, in the old aristocratic manner, bowed equally low, but with such swiftness that we narrowly escaped concussion. You do not usually associate a man of genius, when you see one, with any social class; and, Swinburne being of an aspect so unrelated as it was to any species of human kind, I wondered the more that almost the first impression he made on me, or would make on any one, was that of a very great gentleman indeed. Not of an *old* gentleman, either. Sparse and straggling though the grey hair was that fringed the immense pale dome of his head, and venerably haloed though he was for me by his greatness, there was yet about him something—boyish? girlish? childish, rather; something of a beautifully well-bred child. But he had the eyes of a god, and the smile of an elf.

It is that bewitching childishness which is so engagingly caught in the caricature of the poet drawing Mr. Gosse by the hand to see Rossetti. We can see in it, so far as the limits of a small reproduction will allow, the very movement of a child, the irrepressibility, the straining eagerness to hurry,—though we cannot see the flood of auburn hair which, in strong relief from dimmer colours, makes the whole picture so enjoyable.

In the essay it is the homeliness, the—seeming—ordinariness of Mr. Beerbohm's description which succeeds better than any fervent panegyric.

> He smiled only to himself, and to his plateful of meat, and to the small bottle of Bass's pale ale that stood before him—ultimate allowance of one who had erst clashed cymbals in Naxos. This small bottle he eyed often and with enthusiasm, seeming to waver between the rapture of broaching it now and the grandeur of having it to look forward to.

And later, when he had believed Watts-Dunton selfish in not drawing Swinburne sooner into the conversation, he found that

> It was simply a sign of the care with which he watched over his friend's welfare. Had Swinburne been admitted earlier to the talk, he would not have taken his proper quantity of roast mutton.

And of his own part he tells us :

" To him the writings of Cyrano de Bergerac were as fresh as paint—as fresh as to me, alas, was the news of their survival."

Then there is another delightful confession. Max Beerbohm was ashamed, in Swinburne's library, of shaking his head every time his illustrious host asked if he had read some early play.

" I quibbled, I evaded, I was very enthusiastic and uncomfortable."

At last Swinburne laid before him a book whose title he thought he recognised.

" ' This of *course* I have read,' I heartily shouted."

But that turned out to be a book the only copy of which Swinburne fondly believed to be his.

" ' Theodore ! Do you hear this ? It seems that they have now a copy of *The Country Wench* in the Bodleian. . . . They might have told me,' he wailed."

" I sacrificed myself," Mr. Beerbohm owns, " on the altar of sympathy."

But, since quotations from *No.* 2, *The Pines*, speak so eloquently for themselves, I shall fear, if I make any more, " by dithyrambs, to hasten the reaction of critics against " the author.

It remains only to be said that the end of this essay (where Mr. Beerbohm invents a conversation between Watts-Dunton and himself in Elysium—a conversation built up with all his skill in parody, all his sympathy and insight)—the end of this essay touches the heights of imaginative writing, with a union of extremes which only a few can fully understand and fewer still attain, —the perfect blending of laughter and of tears.

PART II

PART II

THE CARICATURES OF MAX

I

In England caricature is little understood, and there are very few caricaturists: and to decide which of these is cause and which effect is extremely difficult. What is caricature? We will begin by trying to discover what, in England, it is generally supposed to be. Walker, Webster, and the general public regard it as "a ludicrous representation." It is surely more than that.

Let us, then, go back a little. Horace, for example, evidently had some conception of the same nature when he talks of *vultum alicujus in pejus fingere*, whilst the ingenious authors of an old English-Latin dictionary in my possession (but the title-page is missing, and there is nothing to tell me who the lexicographers were), suggest that "caricaturist" may be rendered by "gryllorum pictor"—a painter of comic figures. And here, incidentally, we trace a derivation from the Greek γρύλλος or γρῦλος (γρῦ—a grunt)—a pig, porker—the vehicle of insult throughout the ages. Horace's idea of putting the worser construction on any one's face usually fits the modern sense of the word, but it is too

narrow. The true caricaturist, though he no doubt more readily seizes an advantage unfavourable to his victim, should and occasionally does make the most of a seraphic smile or a beautifully cut coat.

Murray tells us only a little more; namely, that caricature is an Italian word (as is natural, for Italy was the birthplace of the art) and was used as such by Sir T. Browne, who in 1690 wrote to a friend—"When men's faces are drawn with resemblance to some other animals the Italians call it, to be drawn in caricatura." And that immediately recalls a drawing of Mr. Gladstone as a watch-dog, or Abdul Hamid as a tiger or a snake or an elephant (it matters little), or Queen Anne as a dodo, and these are not at all what I think of as caricatures. The subtle brain concocts a drawing of—say—Abdul Hamid, not with a plain elephant's body, but as a man who has, plainly enough to the discerning eye, elephantine qualities—always supposing that the caricaturist perceived these qualities in his subject.

A century after Browne, Goldsmith, in *She Stoops to Conquer*, says: "I shall be stuck up in caricatura in all the print shops." But earlier than that we get a much more satisfactory account from a letter to the *Spectator*, dated November 15th, 1712, contributed by Hughes, on *The Dignity of Human Nature*. There he quotes Pascal: "It is of dangerous consequence to represent to man how near he is to the level of the beasts, without showing him at the same time his greatness. It is likewise dangerous to let him see his greatness without his meanness. It is more dangerous yet to leave him ignorant of either; but very beneficial that he should be

made sensible of both." Hughes had been talking of partiality in the judgment of human nature, giving as instances politicians, who " can resolve the most shining actions among men into artifice and design " ; and satirists who " describe nothing but deformity." " From all these hands," he goes on, " we have such draughts of mankind, as are represented in those burlesque pictures which the Italians call caricaturas ; where the art consists in preserving, amidst distorted proportions and aggravated features, some distinguishing likeness of the person, but in such a manner as to transform the most agreeable beauty into the most odious monster."

Returning to Murray we find that Caricature in Art, used now as an English word, is a " Grotesque and ludicrous representation of persons or things by exaggeration of their most characteristic or striking features," or again, " A portrait or other artistic representation, in which the characteristic features of the original are exaggerated with ludicrous effect."

Sydney Smith used the word in our modern sense, and Macaulay in the essay, written in 1827, on Machiavelli, says that it is " not certain that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed " just as " the best portraits are perhaps those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature "—which seems to be another way of saying that since for human intelligence no truth is absolute, we do better in trusting a little to our intuitive faculties rather than in representing cold " fact " as our senses seem to tell it to us.

SELF-CARICATURES.

Made by Max Beerbohm when at Charterhouse.

We turn now to our own periodicals, and we find that what are commonly called cartoons and caricatures are in the popular imagination interchangeable terms. Any representation of a group of individuals, whether actual or imaginary, whether for polemic or political or merely humorous intention is liable to be called a "cartoon," whilst the tendency is to describe any "ludicrous representation" of a single person as a "caricature." For this purpose the public generally demands a little body and a large head, which shall be as nearly as possible a portrait with some laughable quality about it. How many "caricatures" have we seen, for instance, of the late President Roosevelt with that huge conventional head? Max, on the other hand, drew him with a mountainous body, with stupendous hands, and—a tiny head. For that was, so to put it, the gist of him to Max. Certainly he has drawn far more people with big heads and little bodies, but then he has more often chosen people who in life *have* big heads.

A large number of daily and other papers supply drawings of the big-headed type, because there is a superstition—it may be more than that—which impels editors to believe that in order to rub in some social or political point you must be funny, and a further superstition has it that little bodies with big heads are excruciatingly funny. Does it follow, however, that in order to be funny you must also be vulgar? When we think of the popular cartooning of the day, we find such unmitigated vulgarity, in idea or in representation, such cheapness, that we are forced to the conclusion

that we are a very vulgar people. Of course, not everyone is expected to enjoy the inspired subtleties of Max, but is there no mean between them and the banalities of Asterisk and Asterisky ? We seldom find that mean, at all events. Some vulgarity is exceedingly funny, no doubt : but the combination rarely finds expression in English caricature.

To return for a little while to the authorities, Monsieur Henri Bergson has deliberately written on the subject, and Mr. Roger Fry may be misrepresented as having done so.

However regular we may imagine a face to be, writes M. Bergson,* however harmonious its lines and supple its movements, their adjustment is never altogether perfect : there will always be discoverable the signs of some impending bias, the vague suggestion of a possible grimace, in short some favourite distortion towards which Nature seems to be particularly inclined. The art of the caricaturist consists in detecting this, at times, imperceptible tendency, and in rendering it visible to all eyes by magnifying it. He makes his models grimace, as they would do themselves if they went to the end of their tether. Beneath the skin-deep harmony of form, he divines the deep-seated recalcitrance of matter. He realizes disproportions and deformations which must have existed in nature as mere inclinations, but which have not succeeded in coming to a head, being held in check by a higher force. This art, which has a touch of the diabolical, raises up the demon who had been overthrown by the angel. Certainly, it is an art that exaggerates, and yet the definition would be very far from complete were exaggeration alone alleged to be its aim and object, for there exist caricatures that are more lifelike than

* *Laughter : an essay on the meaning of the Comic.* Authorised translation by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell.

portraits, caricatures in which the exaggeration is scarcely noticeable, whilst, inversely, it is quite possible to exaggerate to excess without obtaining a real caricature.

Here at last we are beginning to arrive at a true conception of this very subtle art. But though M. Bergson obviously, at the back of his mind, when writing those last sentences, apprehended what I may call spiritual caricature, he does not mention it in so many words. Just as good parody does not consist merely in ludicrous exaggeration of manner, but in the choice of subject and the potential method of treatment, so good caricature besides exaggerating manifest physical peculiarities, dips also into the heart and mind of the individual and renders him not as he commonly appears or, even, has ever appeared but as, under given (and, again, exaggerated) circumstances he would appear. That is one thing the public (from which, once more, present company is rigidly excepted) do not fully appreciate. They do not, as a rule, laugh with Max, but at him. He draws a man, let us say, with goggle-eyes, and the public laughs, because the exaggeration is very funny indeed. If the man is well known by sight, the most literal of the spectators are apt to say, " Oh, but he hasn't really got eyes like that " : and the slightly less literal will say the same, adding that by no caricaturish licence should his eyes be made to goggle so much. But those who personally know the subject understand that his eyes are made to goggle not necessarily in exaggeration of physical appearances, but to indicate a potential appearance, and intensity, or greed, or fear, or earnestness—whichever quality (or whatever other quality

ostensible in goggle-eyes) is to be found in the victim's spiritual composition. Mr. Raven-Hill, the *Punch* cartoonist, contributed a preface to *Caricatures of Twenty-five Gentlemen*, Max's first book of drawings, where he observes (in a manner faintly reminiscent of Max himself) : " It is a mistake to suppose that everybody can understand and enjoy caricatures more easily than any other sort of art. When I was assisting in the management of a periodical to which Max was contributing a series of caricatures, we used to get letters from people all over the country, pointing out that Mr. Blank was not half so fat, or Lord Dash not half so bald as Max had made him, or Mr. Blank-Dash hadn't got legs like pins. Max's caricatures are difficult to the public at large, partly because the public is not accustomed to seeing real caricatures, and partly because, in many cases, it is not well acquainted with the person caricatured. I do not know if Max knows his people well, but I have invariably found that a caricature of his that has not greatly struck me at first, has always become marvellous in resemblance as I have known the subject of it better."

There is indeed no question of " high-brow " appreciation : it is chiefly a matter of close observation, so far as the spectator is concerned.

Mr. Roger Fry, who has been dealt with at least twice by Max, and who collected his most stimulating and delightfully written essays in a book, *Vision and Design*, is, of course, a writer upon serious art, and if we may include caricature for a moment in that portentous category, we may find Mr. Fry helpful. In the first

place he luminously points out how such painters as Monet raised a fury of indignation in the public breast on account of what was regarded as their "audacious humbug," when all the time they had a truly profound knowledge of nature and the power of using that knowledge in all sincerity. Mr. Fry tells us that ordinary people have "no idea of what things really look like," because they are so accustomed to observing only those objects which, for the practical purposes of life, it is necessary for them to observe.

The artist's attitude to natural form, he says in *An Essay in Æsthetics*, is . . . infinitely various according to the emotions he wishes to arouse. He may require for his purpose the most complete representation of a figure, he may be intensely realistic, provided that his presentment, in spite of its closeness to natural appearance, disengages clearly for us the appropriate emotional elements. Or he may give us the merest suggestion of natural forms, and rely almost entirely upon the force and intensity of the emotional elements involved in his presentment.

We may, then, dispense once for all with the idea of likeness to Nature, of correctness or incorrectness as a test, and consider only whether the emotional elements inherent in natural form are adequately discovered, unless, indeed, the emotional idea depends at any point upon likeness, or completeness of representation.

And again:

With the new indifference to representation we have become much less interested in skill and not at all interested in knowledge. We are thus no longer cut off from a great deal of barbaric and primitive art the very meaning of which escaped the understanding of those who demanded a certain standard of skill in representation before they could give serious consideration to a work of art.

Now the true caricaturist never troubles himself at all about the test of correctness in that sense, though skill matters to him very greatly. Whether the skill of the caricaturist is skill in a different meaning of the word than that which we associate with " serious " art is a matter for Mr. Fry and other artist-critics to decide. A caricature must be in part representative, or else it would have no point for us. But it need not be so obvious a likeness that a descriptive label can be dispensed with. For many admirable caricatures are not good physical likenesses. If we know the subject intimately, if he is a personal friend or enemy, whose affectations and insincerities, inherent gloominess or joviality of outlook, goodness, badness, sense of duty, recklessness, or what not are, from us, no secrets, then we shall recognise him in a caricature which has but a particle of physical resemblance. But if we have only a quite general knowledge, at second hand, of his qualities or defects, the same caricature will still give us keen enjoyment. We say to ourselves : " Who *is* it, now, who has that cold fish-like stare at nothing in particular and the world at large ? " And we look in the catalogue, and when we see the name we curse our dullness ; for the inevitability of the caricature, once we have the clue of identity, becomes at once apparent. This is not merely being " wise after the event " ; for we really do see merits in the drawing then, which necessarily elude us until our memories have been stirred in the necessary direction.

The French caricaturist, " Sem," has a peculiar gift in that his intuition in regard to subjects whom he has

"This is my Receipt for Max."
A Caricature by William Nicholson.

never seen before enables him to produce excellent caricatures at first sight, and more than merely physical caricatures at that. On one occasion he was taken to Newmarket by an English friend, where, on the course, he made numerous lightning caricatures of people he had never seen before, the names being easily supplied by people who recognised the drawings at the end of the day.

Max, on the other hand, very seldom draws from life, and the result when he does is generally disastrous. His usual method is to study the victim when he is talking to him, or at any rate in the same room, and to go home and make the caricature which necessarily consists of the salient features (or lack of them) which have been retained in his memory. It follows then, that people whom he has met but casually are very often best represented. Of people whom he knows with very great intimacy he is apt to make portraits rather than caricatures, for, knowing them, he accurately describes those details of their appearance which are not paramount.

As said already, the real art of caricature is extraordinarily rare: and in England especially, we look about us and we find that the genuine caricaturists, whose work we know, can be counted on the fingers of one hand—and then, after reflection, we shall have to reckon again, and drastically correct that tale.

Virtually, Max stands alone. Certainly there are no other caricaturists of any kind outside quotation marks who are not indebted to him. This is said deliberately and in no spirit of ingratitude, for instance, to Mr.

Nicholson who has with great kindness given me his "receipt" for Max: but Mr. Nicholson only caricatures people now and again in all lightness of heart. Caricature with him is merely relaxation from serious work—a joke. And that applies to many others, not only professing artists. And, as a matter of fact, the drawing by Mr. Nicholson is a convention—or, as he puts it, a receipt—rather than a caricature. A true caricature is always an interpretation; it is very often an indictment. Mr. Nicholson's drawing, consisting, as will be seen, mainly of eyes, does hit off the victim in a way that, while it makes no comment, yet vigorously suggests him.

Indeed that part of the public which really admires good caricature, gnashes its teeth in the knowledge, vague though it may be, that some of the best work of that nature has been relegated to the comparative oblivion of private and familiar circulation. And Max himself has made many drawings (even of general interest) which have never been seen by the public. And through the kindness of friends I am able to reproduce here drawings by Max which have never been seen, at large, before.

II

Among the illustrations in this book will be found a page of rough and rather uncouth pen and ink sketches by Max representing himself as he rather thought he was going to be. These drawings were made when he was a boy of fifteen, and though there is in them no special merit, we do get just the very lightest shadow of coming events, so far as the method of workmanship is concerned. Whether he meant to portray himself as an elderly man, as he is seen in these drawings, I don't know. Probably not. It is one of the most persistent faults in a beginner to draw faces which appear old when they are meant to be young.

Here we see him " at the Bar " (it will be remembered that he was once going to be a lawyer), " at Oxford," " drawing," " walking " (possibly with his big brother), and " at the Haymarket " (no doubt watching the big brother on the stage). The large central head is the most grievous libel : for at no time of his life were his cheeks pendulous and flaccid as they are here, never did he lack chin : and its—so to speak—double absence here is painfully felt. The reader's attention is, however, called to the heavy and unfaltering line of the profile in this central sketch, and the perfect curve of the collar. Just by themselves these are trivialities, but

as a forecast of what was to come they are significant and interesting. His handwriting then was, by the way, virtually the same as it is now.

Most small children make drawings, but that form of amusement and expression is much less common amongst boys of fifteen ; and in them it usually bespeaks some persisting need, possibly some talent. Drawing, then, and especially caricaturing, appealed very strongly to Max from the earliest days, long before he thought of writing ; and drawing as an occupation still comes first in his affection. To this day there is in him nothing " professional " so far as drawing is concerned. He draws as a child does—for the fun of the thing. I said before that, with Max, caricature is the same thing as the writing of essays, and so in its result it is, but the actual work involved in drawing is infinitely more enjoyable. It comes easier to him : every moment with a pencil or paint box is a pleasure to him. Not unrelievedly so, as we have seen, are the longer hours spent in writing. And so, of course, the total amount of his drawings is, if I may try and measure in relation two irrelative and incommensurable quantities, much greater than the total amount of his writings.

Max's first public appearance as a caricaturist took place much earlier than is generally supposed. It would be immensely interesting to know how many readers of the *Strand Magazine* in its second year, thrilled as they were by the " Stories from the Diary of a Doctor," ardent followers of the bland if then youthful stupidities of Watson and the equally bland assurance of Sherlock Holmes, noticed in the September,

November, and December numbers of 1892 some pages of "Club Types," drawn by H. Maxwell Beerbohm? There were in all thirty-six of these Types, reproduced very small, and though in those days they must have been regarded just as amusing little pictures, quite cleverly symbolising the clubs named, one would like to know if there was then any one with the perspicacity to realise what these little drawings actually were? It is to be presumed that they were not caricatures of actual people: it is not too great a presumption to trace in them and in much of Max's work thereafter the influence of Pellegrini—"Ape" of *Vanity Fair*.

In these drawings the diverse types are well sized up. There is the glossy and important stateliness of the Marlborough, the pinnacle of tired refinement for the Savile; for the Bachelors' there is a slim young man rather like the artist; while the Union is represented by a respectable old buffer not unlike the Anthony Trollope done by "Spy" in 1873, though not like enough to dismiss the probability of a chance resemblance. (Not that there is anything heinous in showing the influence of another man: it is but conscious or unconscious homage.) At that time Max was fond of drawing shiny top-hats with precise radiations or parallels of black and white. The member of the Senior United Service Club is an old man with very dark, resplendent hair, a very curly moustache, drooping somewhat, a vividly hooked nose and a good deal of "cut" about the frock-coat. Here, and whenever he could do so plausibly, he introduced, as he did ever afterwards and does now (when they are out of fashion)

high lustrous collars and water-fall ties (to use the least fanciful of its many fancy names). I should imagine that the reason for his persisting fondness for that kind of necktie is two-fold: it gives him an excellent opportunity for drawing sleek and flowing curves, with the richly shaded splendour of satin; and, moreover, a tie of that denomination with an appropriate pin seems to be, under Max's hand, an unmistakable emblem of prosperity. The rich and comfortable in his caricatures, whether actual or typical, almost always have these ties.

In the January number of the *Strand*, in 1895, there appeared an article by Mr. Harold George on "Oxford at Home," illustrated by Max. These again are types and not, ostensibly, individuals. They are unsigned, though their authorship is acknowledged in the index. But they need no signature now, for they are, as you might say, signed all over; just as, though in a lesser degree, the club types were three years before. Max formed a definite style of his own almost at the beginning, and to that earliest style the manner of nearly all his mature work is traceable.

Of these Oxford drawings "a member of the Bullingdon" is an admirably conventionalised horsey man, though the choice of subjects, or rather the arrangement of them is conventional in its less pleasing sense. "Dons: old School, new School"; a gorgeous youth vaulting out of a champagne glass—"Blood," juxtaposed to a dowdy one supported by an open lexicon—"Smug"—are the sort of ideas which are—or at least were then—fairly usual. But the actual drawing of

these dons, and "The Lady Novelists' Ideal" are not usual, but original; and, as one still hears said occasionally of sermons and essays—"thoughtful."

During part of 1894 and 1895 Max was a regular contributor of caricatures to *Pick-me-up*. But some of these suffer, as did some of his dramatic criticisms in the *Saturday*, from that very regularity, because they had to be done. I don't know, but it is more than likely that the choice of subjects did not always rest with the artist. That is the worst (well—not the worst, but the worst in that sense) of the Press—even the best of it is interested in all sorts of people who could by no possibility raise a single flicker of inspiration in an intelligent caricaturist. This is an arrow at a venture, but some of the *Pick-me-up* caricatures were quite poor and that is probably the reason. When he came to draw people whom he would have chosen, even if in fact he didn't,—Lord Lonsdale, W. S. Gilbert, Oscar Wilde, and others—the difference is very plain. Lord Lonsdale, especially, is most searchingly perceived. Wilde he has caricatured many times, without much variation; and Max has made the most of his peculiar hands. The fingers were extremely pointed, the thumb curved sharply back like a claw in reverse. The whole effect in the caricatures of this hand is that of a kind of crab, the elaborately jewelled ring being its eye.

Amongst others caricatured in *Pick-me-up* were R. G. Knowles, the comedian, who has no face and is all costume, Paderewski and Richard le Gallienne (rather too easily) all hair and no face, Corney Grain, in, of course, enormous bulk, and—a rare thing, for Max

hardly ever made drawings of women—Miss Ada Reeve, looking the incarnation of high spirits. He did also some of the sketches illustrating the dramatic criticism. Another reason why the *Pick-me-up* caricatures occasionally fail is that they were mostly drawn with pen and ink, in which medium he is never so successful as with pencil.

Any student of Max's caricatures will have noticed his constancy to certain people. Mr. Balfour, for example, has appealed to him from the days of *Pick-me-up* to the present time: so has Mr. Pinero, no doubt for the sake of his eyebrows.

It was in the third number of the *Yellow Book* (October, 1894) that there appeared, with the appropriate essay, the drawing of King George IV. which is reproduced here. So that, the same periodical which had introduced him to the literary public as an essayist, managed also his *début*, a very notable one, so far as the same sort of public was concerned, as a caricaturist. This drawing is a most convincing presentment,—not necessarily of George IV. as he was: that is open to question—but George IV. as Max, judging by the essay, conceived him to be. This drawing is in pencil, touched here and there with blue and red—a tinge of red in the multiple chins and blue for the Garter riband. The folds of the enormous stock are specially to be commended. The outlines, the reader will see, occasionally falter, as in the skirt of the coat, but elsewhere though they are made up of many strokes their cumulative effect is wonderfully true. Nowadays Max will draw *one* line (where but one is

needed), one beautiful curve which is certain and unhesitating and right, and he will do it at once. With him it was no doubt largely a question of practice, but for a long time after he drew this George IV. he had to depend for his effect upon composite lines. Then, the arrangement of this drawing, the proportion and placing of the dark in relation to the light masses, and the sense of symmetrical design in the curves of the waistcoat collar swooping from beneath the lapel of the coat—all these testify to the fastidious proclivities of an artist.

I have heard people complain that this drawing is vulgar and gross. As a drawing it is not; but it is an extremely sensitive caricature of a man in whom, with other qualities, grossness at all events emphatically had its place.

Amongst other magazines in which Max's caricatures appeared from time to time was the *Savoy* edited by Arthur Symons with Aubrey Beardsley as art editor; which, before it appeared was supposed to be about to cast the very moderate "daring" (how odd the word seems now to us in that connection !) of the *Yellow Book* in a very obscure shade.

> "With merrier lips old Pan shall play
> Drain-pipes along the sewer's way"—

wrote (then Mr.) Owen Seaman in anticipation: nor was his prognosis wholly unmerited.

In the first number of the *Savoy* there is a caricature of "Mr. Beerbohm Tree," which is not specially remarkable, save for the extreme purity of the line. The actor

is standing in his famous and favourite attitude of those days, his right hand in his pocket, his left shoulder thrown back in such a way as almost to pull his coat off: the left hand being perched high on a long cane.

In another number of the *Savoy* there is a drawing of Mr. Arthur Roberts, which is remarkable because it shows the extreme liberties that Max used to take in those days with the human anatomy. In this case the mouth, characteristically twisted on one side, is literally placed inches out of its natural position, however distorted that may have been. It is drawn in a place where no mouth could possibly be—not under the nose at all. And why should it be? It conveys the impression required, and the very essence of caricaturish technique is to take violent liberties. In this respect Max's great, and recent, improvement in the technique belonging to normal and serious art has tended to come between him and true caricature. He is, of course, infinitely more subtle than he used to be, and he uses the finest shades of exaggeration with admirable effect; but the almost entire loss of gross exaggeration is to be deplored.

Caricatures of Twenty-five Gentlemen was published in 1896, and was dedicated "To the Shade of Carlo Pellegrini." It is an extremely interesting little book to study, if only for the purposes of comparison: for half of the subjects have since been caricatured by Max again and again. Lord Rosebery comes first, and his treatment has never varied much since—the big eyes wide-opened in a kind of intellectual innocence, and the sweep of the collar with its rounded points, provide

Max with the opportunities his pencil seems ever to like best. The drawing of Joseph Chamberlain is a good instance of an excellent caricature which is a bad physical likeness. "Aubrey Beardsley" is a diagram, not a mere exaggeration. If it were done anew to-day it would probably be called a portrait of one of the "trick" schools of art, for it is full of anatomical absurdities, but remains both a good likeness and a good caricature. This drawing was, I think, first reproduced in the second number of the *Savoy*. Then there is once again, as again on many occasions there was yet to be—the infinite slenderness of Mr. Balfour; the chin of Mr. Kipling, the cigar of King Edward (then Prince of Wales). Mr. Robert Hichens, with great affability, stirring his tea is a portrait rather than a caricature. Mr. (subsequently—Sir) George Lewis is a caricature without being in any sense a portrait. It was a good beginning and there were in the book very few failures.

When *Caricatures of Twenty-five Gentlemen* was first published, some one who had bought a copy, meeting its author one day, asked him if he would write his name in it; and on his return to his home in the country, sent the book for this purpose to Mr. Beerbohm, who promptly did not only as he had been asked, but added a caricature of himself. He then put the book on a shelf against the time, perhaps, when brown paper and string should be within reach. And ten years went by.

And one day Mr. Beerbohm met the owner of the book again, who said nothing about it, but looked

wistful. And Mr. Beerbohm's conscience smote him, and he went home, and again wrote his name in the book, and he added another caricature of himself as he then was; and, moreover, as some sort of quittance, made fresh caricatures of all the Twenty-five Gentlemen, side by side, on the right hand, with the original prints. And he put the book on a shelf against the time, perhaps, when brown paper and string should be within reach. And ten years went by.

And one day Mr. Beerbohm met the owner of the book again, who said nothing about it, but looked wistful. And Mr. Beerbohm's conscience smote him, and he went home, and again wrote his name in the book, and he added another caricature of himself as he then was; and, moreover, as some sort of quittance, made fresh caricatures of all the Twenty-five Gentlemen, side by side, on the left hand, with the original prints. And he put the book on a shelf against the time, perhaps, when brown paper should be within his reach and string at all procurable (for we have now come to the year 1916). And—I am sorry to spoil the story, but—I believe the book has been sent, quite lately, to its owner. And for that book, as it now is, it must be well worth having waited a quarter of a century.

To an earlier period by three years than the *Twenty-five Gentlemen*, belong the drawings, reproduced here for the first time, made in a copy of a little book by Mr. Richard le Gallienne. Max Beerbohm's aptitude for illustrating his own or his friends' copies of other people's books has already been referred to. The first drawing shown here is made on the cover under the

printed title. It satirises one aspect of the 'nineties by describing the transmutation of John Bull into an ornate poet. "The Bourgeois a Decadent is Become." The second drawing, which is from the title-page within, speaks for itself: in the third we see Mr. le Gallienne with one top-hat for each side of his *coiffure*, winking at Mr. John Lane. Next—and this is an admirable bit of drawing—a minor poet, who has invoked his Muse, at the sight of her promptly thrusts himself through with his own pen. Lastly, we have Mr. le Gallienne once more in a drawing which despite some infirmity of line exhibits that very virtuous feeling for symmetry which is so signal a characteristic of Max's work to-day.

The self-caricature in a top-hat and loudly checked trousers also belongs, roughly speaking, to this period. There is in it one considerable fault—the inaccuracies, within the limits of the convention, in the topper. The latitude allowed to caricaturists is chiefly confined to proportion: a hat may be seven sizes too large or too small, but if the caricaturist's intention is to present a particular sort of hat, the shape of it and the proper shadows should be given faithfully. Here the proportions of the hat are caricatured, but are not correctly drawn in relation to the artist's own conception. Apart from that the caricature is beautiful in the sense that perfect curves are always things of beauty: and the shading of the hair, with its rudimentary pigtail, the high glossiness of the collar, the long crescent of white waistcoat dividing the line of dark tie from the mass of dark coat—all contribute to a true rhythm of design.

III

The caricatures in Max's second book of drawings, *The Poet's Corner*, were exhibited, with a few others, at the Carfax Gallery in May, 1904, and had no doubt been for the most part made not long before. On the other hand, *Cartoons: The Second Childhood of John Bull*, which was not published until 1911, had been drawn in 1901. So that these two books should be classed together, and *A Book of Caricatures*, which came in between and was published in 1907, should be considered later, for the drawings in it are far in advance of the others. It is indeed one of the most satisfying collections of Max's work.

The Poet's Corner and *The Second Childhood of John Bull* contain many good caricatures which are extremely amusing, but the drawings lack the sleekness and smoothness which make the later work beautiful; and, for the most part, they want the monstrosity which is so engaging in the earliest caricatures of all.

Among the *Poets*, Homer is seen, with innumerable heads "going his round," accompanied by a dog with a money box. William Wordsworth, in the Lake District, is represented as a paragon of aged benevolence, chucking a little girl under the chin; and here there is a hint of the fine sense of composition which was to develop much later. "Mr. Tennyson reading 'In

Memoriam' to his Sovereign" is, perhaps, a better satire. This is an ugly drawing, but then ugliness was necessary to carry the point. We see an enormous room, with crimson curtains and table cloth and a plum-coloured carpet with a floral diaper pattern of pale blue; and in it the poet sits declaiming, at a very respectful distance from the tiny Queen. It is a commentary on Victorianism generally rather than on Tennyson.

The most amusing of the series is the drawing of Matthew Arnold which is possibly derived in part from the unsigned *Vanity Fair* caricature, published in 1871. In Max's drawing, a little girl with a pigtail and the dark red dress of the period and her hands dutifully clasped behind her, looks up to the big man, lounging with a wide sardonic grin against the mantelpiece. Underneath is written: "To him, Miss Mary Augusta, his niece: 'Why, Uncle Matthew, oh why, will not you be always wholly serious?'"

Then there is "Mr. Robert Browning taking tea with the Browning Society," in which the comfortable, homely old gentleman sits unconcernedly, with terribly earnest and intense "intellectuals" (who, we have been told, put in the meaning to many of the master's poems) yearning all round him.

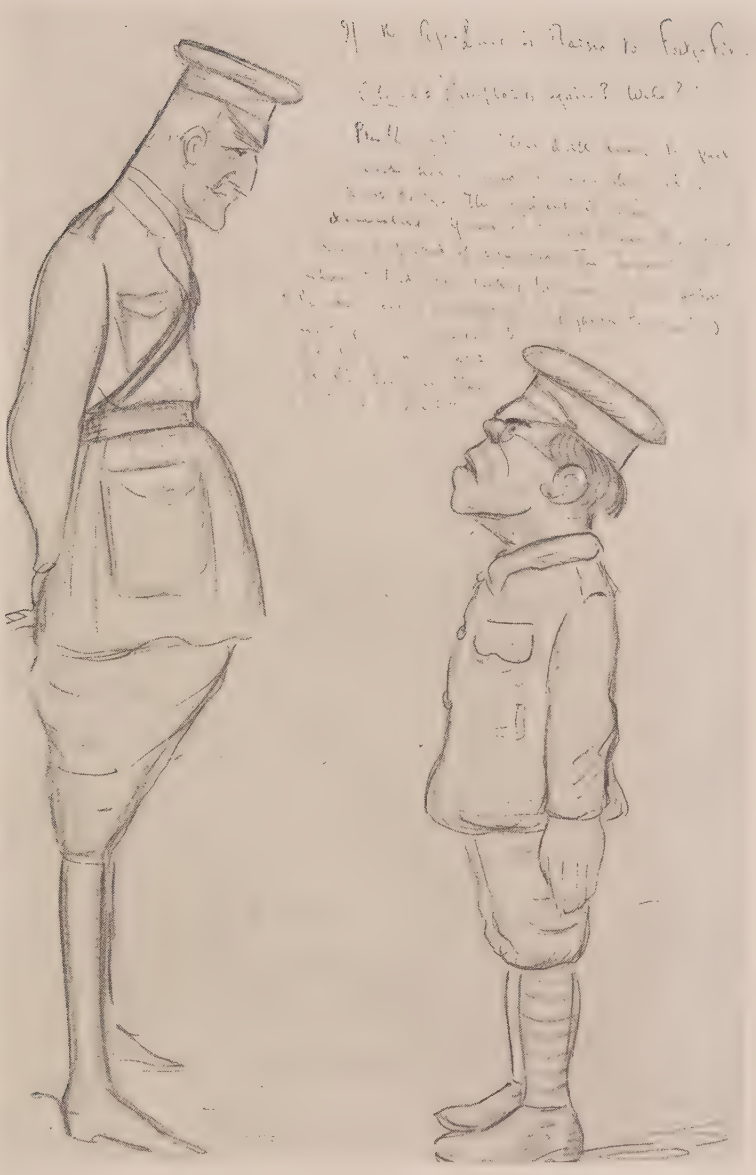
Byron, on the other hand, shaking the dust of England from his shoes, is poor, whether as a portrait, a caricature, or as a drawing. But the splendid energy of the hairy and ancient Walt Whitman merrily "inciting the Bird of Freedom to soar" makes up for it. Then, we in company with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain take Mr. Edmund Gosse and Mr. Austin Dobson

unawares at the Board of Trade in the early 'eighties, composing a ballade during office hours.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, with his friends, in his back garden, is well enough in his way, but is entirely eclipsed by the series of Rossetti drawings done by Max during 1916 and 1917. Nevertheless, the impishness of Swinburne stretching down from the top of the garden wall to pull Whistler's white forelock, and Watts-Dunton's finger held up in staid warning is delightful. This and almost all the other drawings in the book suffer from the too liberal use of a fine pen. The line is often true and expressive, but the effect is all cumulative, and not spontaneous.

The best drawing among the *Poets* is that which discloses Samuel Taylor Coleridge "table-talking." He sits, slightly overcome, at one end of his table, while his guests lean together on either side; so that in the front and the back view there is an almost pyramidal effect, each man leaning on his neighbour, till we come to the apex, a guest with his nose pointing upwards. They are all snoring.

Neither Mr. W. B. Yeats nor Mr. George Moore have been for long neglected throughout Max's career, and here the poet is seen seriously presenting the mildly bewildered novelist, who is sucking the knob of his cane, to the Queen of the Fairies. Escape rather than neglect is, perhaps, what Mr. Rudyard Kipling has ever lacked at Max's hand, and when he "takes a bloomin' day aht, on the blasted 'eath, along with Brittania, 'is gurl," we can only expect him to exchange hats with her, which he very happily does.



"If the Age-Limit is Raised to Forty-Five."

Colonel: "Complaints again? Well?"

Pte. Rothenstein: "Our drill during the past week has averaged no more than eleven hours daily. The regiment is being demoralized. Yesterday I saw Private Beerbohm buying a packet of cigarettes. The Sergeant, to whom I had been talking for some minutes after Parade, said 'Oh, blow them Ajanta Frescoes.' I must press the question I put to you yesterday: Is this Salisbury Plain or is it Capua?"

A Caricature by Max.

In *The Second Childhood of John Bull*, Mr. Kipling appears again in a Norfolk jacket, a cricket cap, smoking a clay pipe, and holding a mug of beer. This cartoon is called "De arte poetica," and the decrepit and querulous old John says to him:

Yes, I've took a fancy to you, young feller. 'Tain't often I cottons to a pote, neither. 'Course there's Shakespeare. 'E was a wonder, 'e was (sentimentally) 'Swan of Avon' *I* calls 'im. Take 'im for all in all we shall not look upon 'is likes again. And then there was Tennyson—'im as wrote the ode to Balaclavy. 'E was a master-mind too, in 'is way. So's Lewis Morris. Knows right from wrong like the palm of 'is 'and, and ain't afraid to say where one begins and t'other ends. But most potes ain't like that. What I say is, *they ain't wholesome.* Look at Byron! Saucy 'ound, with 'is stuck-up airs and 'is stuck-down collars and 'is ogling o' the gals. But *I* soon sent 'im to the rightabout. 'Outside,' said I, and out 'e went. And then there was that there friend of 'is, went by the name o' Shelley, 'ad to go too. 'E was a fair caution, was Shelley. Drounded hisself in a I-talian lake, and I warrant that was the first bath 'e ever took. Most of 'em is like that—*not wholesome,* and can't keep a civil tongue i' their heads. You're different, you are: don't give yourself no 'aughty airs, and though you're rough (with your swear-words and your what-nots), I will say as 'ow you've always bin very civil an' respec'ful to myself. You're one of the right sort, you are. And them little tit-bits o' information what you gives me about my Hempire—why Alf 'armsworth 'imself couldn't do it neater, I *do* believe. Got your banjo with you to-night? Then empty that there mug, and give us a toon.

"Lest we forget Ourselves" shows John Bull lying very drunk on Mafeking night and similar occasions, while in another cartoon he ignores "Colenso, Magers-

fontein, Spion Kop," in peaceful slumber. He cringes to Brother Jonathan and snarls over his shoulder at Ireland. But Max is rather evidently on his side when, from his pew, John Bull thinks " The Crusade against Ritualism " is better than cock-fighting and, chuckling, watches the encounter between the acidulous priest with his censer, and an infuriated opponent with his umbrella.

In " De Arte Theatrali " the old tyrant dismisses his maidservant, Melpomene, but keeps Thalia, so long as she doesn't go getting any ideas into her head. And the book ends with a most refreshing classical figure of " The Twentieth Century Pressing the English Rose between the Pages of History."

In the *Second Childhood* there is a rather diverting printer's error. " See Contemporary Historians *passim* " was what Max Beerbohm wrote, beneath one of the titles : but what you read is " See Contemporary Historian's passion." One can, indeed, " see " the passion of some of them after the publication of this book, for John Bull is not revealed, as we have seen, as an altogether customarily endearing personality.

Over and over again critics have solemnly declared that there is no malice in Max—quite as though malice in a satirist were an unpardonable sin. There is malice in all of us : and Max fights, not with a blunted sabre (for he is seldom rude), but with a foil—from the point of which he has, now and again, snicked off the button. There is nothing assertive or pushing about Max, even when he is most egotistic. He is quiet always, and delicate. He has insinuated himself into his present position without the use of his elbows.

IV

In a way of speaking, *The Poet's Corner* and *The Second Childhood of John Bull* mark a period of transition analogous to that occupied by *Yet Again* and *Zuleika Dobson* in regard to Max Beerbohm's writings. *A Book of Caricatures*, published in 1907, shows him triumphantly fledged from that awkward age, and demonstrates, apart from great skill in caricaturing, a very obvious advance in technical proficiency. Here we find Max depending more and more upon pencil work, eked out by a fine steel pen line but not depending on it. His infrequent use of a quill is in an entirely different category, and this with a light wash of colour has been his method in some of the best caricatures that he has ever made. In *A Book of Caricatures* there are, done in this manner, most vivid drawings of "Sem"—the French caricaturist, of "Lord Tweedmouth" and of "Mr. Reginald Turner": whilst in private collections there are a Swinburne, done so long ago as June, 1899, "Sir Squire Bancroft," and "James Welch." These are all particularly good caricatures, but as drawings it is doubtful if Max has ever done better. The Swinburne is really exquisite. For the line of the great forehead—it is nearly a full face—the quill was deliberately left nearly empty of

ink. So there is a perfectly firm, though faint, double line exactly fulfilling the needs of the high light. The few remaining curls are sketched in with a full pen, and the clothes are lightly tinted with a wash. The left shoe is half off the foot—as ever in Max's caricatures of Swinburne. You feel, in looking at this drawing, as at the others mentioned as being of the same feather, that there could have been no preparation, no study on Max's part. He had, I imagine, an inspiration and transferred it to paper, at once, without the slightest hesitation and without a false stroke. It is not the sort of thing that happens often.

In *A Book of Caricatures* all the drawings are very finely reproduced with the utmost care. That is why, in books and periodicals, Max's work of the same period sometimes looks so uneven. He does not " draw well for reproduction " and he needs in that respect the best mechanical processes in use.

The frontispiece to the book in question is in colour and shows " Mr. Sargent at Work "—striding vigorously towards his canvas with an uplifted brush in each hand, and a small string band in the foreground playing to stimulate him. " Mr. Henry Chaplin," despite a small head and a big body, is vastly dignified and the heaviness and bulk of his overcoat, and the softness of its texture, are beautifully suggested. The tight-waisted and scrupulous urbanity of M. de Soveral lose nothing in reproduction, but I do miss the bright blue jowl which ornamented the original.

" Some Members of the New English Art Club " includes an admirable travesty of Professor Rothen-

stein, pointing some argument with one huge finger of a hand almost as large as his body. Max has done this, not because his subject's hands are particularly large, but in order to emphasise the vehemence of the professor's part in the discussion. In this group, amongst many other people, appears the late Mr. Charles Conder, the caricature of whom is so obviously like that which is reproduced in this book, that it must have been done at the same time. Probably my illustration is a finished " study " for the figure in the group. In any case it is, though I say it, better, because the top-hat and the overcoat in the exhibited caricature tend rather to spoil the design. I never saw Mr. Conder, but I am quite prepared to take the excellence of the caricature on trust. As a drawing it seems to me to stand alone, if only for the beautiful lines of the hair, and, especially, the sweep of the detached forelock.

Where Lord Northcliffe is seen suggesting a headline to Mr. Edmund Gosse, Mr. Gosse's expression may be quite easily imagined: there is not only the look of stark horror in the eyes, but the whole attitude speaks: the head is a shade inclined towards the speaker, to make sure that the ear has heard aright. But the body is slightly twisted away, and the hands are clasped, desperately, between the knees.

Lord Lytton is seen delicately resting his hand on his hip with a beautifully curved arm that has no elbow. This is Max's convention, and an exceedingly graphic one, for the arm of a dandy: and he has used it more than once since. Then, the feet of dandies he makes

either very small, in neat refulgent shoes, or else he just makes the legs taper off into vague points. To inelegant persons, on the other hand, he gives huge rounded, but amorphous boots of the most cruelly repulsive kind. I wouldn't say that he gives these boots to people whose qualities he dislikes, for I can think of instances to the contrary: but he certainly has given them to men who in life are well-shod in order to set forth some analogous defect in them.

There is, too, the quiet but disgusted dignity of Mr. Augustine Birrell listening to Mr. Charles Whibley trying to "console him for the loss of his Education Bill by a discourse on the uselessness of teaching anything, sacred or profane, to children of the not-aristocratic class"—which reminds us that age and genuine pride invariably appeal to Max, who never makes any but the kindest fun of them.

As in his writing, so here, Max Beerbohm's jokes, though plain enough sometimes, are always distinguished by his personal outlook. "Mr. H. G. Wells, Prophet and Idealist, conjuring up the Darling Future" is definitely Max's own way of putting it. But there is no one—surely ?—who could not laugh at the bespectacled mother with a huge-headed bespectacled baby to whom the idealist is offering as a toy a small isosceles triangle.

For sheer drawing "Mr. Haddon Chambers" and "Mr. Walter Sickert explaining away the Piazza San Marco," as well as for their merits as caricatures, are as remarkable as much of the latest work: whilst as caricatures alone "Count Benckendorff" and "Mr. William Nicholson" are superb.

THE CARICATURES OF MAX

As I look again through *A Book of Caricatures*, I begin to wonder very seriously whether, as a collection, Max has ever surpassed it. Individual drawings done in later years are certainly as good as any here: they may even be a little better,—certainly as drawings, if not as caricatures. But out of the forty-eight items in this book, I cannot recall one that is definitely poor. Some may be bad caricatures—without intimate knowledge of all the subjects, some of whom are now dead, it is impossible to say: but they all *look* as though they were the creatures of pure inspiration.

V

Fifty Caricatures is, at the time of writing, the best known of Max's books of drawings. For the most part it contains the caricatures exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in May, 1913. As already implied, it is not so satisfactory a collection as that in the book published six years before it. Here and there, scattered throughout it, there are drawings of extraordinary brilliance, with which it is well nigh impossible to find fault : but in many cases the style does not seem somehow to be spontaneously Max's. Not that there is anything about any one of the drawings that could be fastened upon as belonging to the character of any other artist, but some of the drawings lack that sort of inevitability which is seen in *all* the drawings of the previous book. The reason for this is, in part, the greatly increased use of water-colour, and the fact that Max had not as yet overcome the technical difficulty of applying it. Here there is too much pencil work in conjunction with too opaque a tint, and the result in several instances is a heaviness and clumsiness which is entirely foreign to the true manner of Max.

The cover of the book is decorated with the figure of a stout, bald, belaurelled burgess towards whose back an arrow comes flying from the corner. Every line of

him denotes self-satisfaction and self-indulgence. He is not really typical of the contents because Max seldom confers the distinction of caricature upon mediocrity, though occasionally he is forced to do so in order to show the world at large that its ideas upon that subject are mistaken.

Within, there are two caricatures of the carefully drawn rather than the spontaneous sort which are for ever memorable. One is of "Lord Chesterfield" with the same beautifully curved arm that the "Lord Lytton" had in the previous book, and a great wealth of collar and tie and button-hole, but tapering below that almost to nothing. The face is not much exaggerated. This is one of the most graceful and ornamental caricatures that Max has ever exhibited. The other is "Sir Edward Carson," with a grotesque and over-stated malignity of countenance that is more arresting than funny. Wasp-waisted and emaciated, he is wearing simple dark clothes, but from under the tails of his coat appear the frogs of an enormous cavalry sword. This was drawn in 1912, and apart from all its political significance, it is, as a design—as a pattern upon paper over which the eye roves, balancing—say—the head and the sword-hilt, the wide hips and the tiny waist, deeply impressive.

One political cartoon, exceedingly amusing, and made up of individual caricatures of the utmost skill, is quite spoiled as a whole by two blemishes of a species very rarely found in this artist.

"Some Ministers of the Crown, who (monstrous though it seem) have severally some spare pounds to

invest, implore Sir Rufus Isaacs to tell them if he knows of any stocks which they could buy without fear of ultimate profit."

"Sir Rufus Isaacs" is the central figure, looking very bland and innocent, and to arrange the composition of eight others, begging, and holding out greedy palms, all close about him, must have been difficult. And, for the most part, the difficulty is well overcome, but the two serious mistakes make a failure of the whole. In the first, the bridge of Colonel Seeley's nose is absolutely flush with Sir Edward Grey's shoulder; and secondly, the side of Sir Rufus' top-hat, only just obscures the line of Mr. McKenna's bulging forehead. The fact is that Max wanted to display the exaggerated nose and forehead, and could not forego the pleasure of doing so to what, at the time, he considered their best advantage. Placed as they are they quite ruin the design. If the nose had been partly hidden by Sir Edward's coat, and the forehead by the top-hat, they would, in fact, have lost nothing—possibly gained, indeed, even in the literal sense, in the eyes of people with imagination. This is just one of those cases where a good piece of work is marred by lack of the rejectitious faculty.

"Sir Edward Grey" being hugged by the Russian bear, utterly unlike anything Max had ever attempted before, is especially interesting as it shows what can be done with a fairly commonplace idea by the hand of an artist. Not quite so ordinary, but unexpected from Max—is "Mr. Balfour—A Frieze," where there are five figures of Mr. Balfour each precisely alike save for the head which is, in each succeeding presentment, thrown

a little further back, until at last the hat is seen dropping off. Commonplace? Not quite commonplace?—the word and even the qualification of it is used relative only to the present theme. One would never dream of thinking either of these notions "commonplace" had they, more or less similarly, struck another artist.

To return to subjects which are purely characteristic: "Mr. Brookfield (with whom is Mr. Bendall) trying to fall under the spell of the modern drama" is delightful. The modern drama is given as a fearsome young female with *pince-nez*, no chin, sandals and an "art" dress. On the wall behind her hangs a picture of the buxom and more firmly established drama, "flirting" her fan. "Mr. Brookfield," with his head thrown back, is a caricature which, I imagine, must be perfect. There are certain caricatures which tell you, quite plainly, that they are good, however ignorant you may be of the subjects: and subsequent investigation shows, in these instances, that they have told you right.

"Cecils in Conclave" comes, after many anecdotal cartoons, as a great relief, for it is pure caricature of three brothers without any ulterior motive whatever. "Our Yellow Press" (in "Such good 'Copy'") urging Bellona to light up her torch is entertaining apart from its explicit lesson, because the pressman, with his camera, combines every physical and sartorial quality which Max quite obviously abominates.

But, once more, it is when he tackles his own fellows that he is most free and most happy. Here we have Mr. Arnold Bennett sitting on a milestone being sternly lectured by Hilda Lessways for keeping her standing

about, while the respectable Clayhanger dismally waits behind her. This drawing is in Max's roughest style, but it suits the theme.

" Annual Banquet—a Suggestion to the New English Art Club " is inspired. Alternating with the members at the long table are Mr. Asquith, the Prince of Wales (crushed somewhat between Mr. Walter Sickert and Mr. Wilson Steer), the Archbishop of Canterbury (with thumbs and fingers reverently put together), and the late Duke of Argyll. All the guests are in evening clothes, all the members are shaggy and tousled. This group recalls another—" Sudden Appearance of Mr. Max Beerbohm in the New English Art Club," itself having a place in the club's exhibition in, I think, the summer of 1909. There, an exquisitely dressed figure with drooping eyelids, topper in hand, comes gliding down a vista of disreputably attired painters (not individual caricatures this time), who point uncouth fingers at him, in anger and derision.

In *Fifty Caricatures* Mr. Roger Fry is seen in an attitude of ecstasy before a small wooden soldier of the " Noah's Ark " type, standing on a marble pedestal,— " We needs must love the highest when we see it." There are, too, some admirable post-impressionist pictures on the wall that serves as a background. The ingenuous and almost boyish enthusiasm of the critic, both in gesture and in facial expression, are most blissfully counterfeited.

Of wider interest, there are two cartoons here, which find their appropriate sequels (as does Mr. Fry, for that matter) in the exhibition of May, 1921. Here we have

" A Study in Democratic Assimilation " which is one of the subtlest things Max has ever done. Representing the year 1868 we see the " Scion of Proletariat " and " Scion of Nobility " vigorously differentiated. The respective scions for the year 1908 are at the first glance precisely alike, but—only at the first glance . . .

The second drawing of this category shows " The Grave Misgivings of the Nineteenth Century, and the Wicked Amusement of the Eighteenth, in watching the Progress (or whatever it is) of the Twentieth "—which is seen in aeronaut's costume, sweating, desperate, rushing headlong. That " Progress (or whatever it is) " will warm the cockles (or whatever they are) of many a weary heart.

Amongst miscellaneous drawings in private collections, there are several, very little known as yet, mention of which cannot be omitted from any description of Max's work. Some of these have been shown in galleries once, but never reproduced. Some have never been exhibited at all.

There are, for instance, a series of eleven drawings of Mr. Gladstone in the next world, recording his meetings with Parnell, Gordon, the Prince Consort (who cuts him), and the Devil (" Peace with Sulphur " this last picture is called). Then, not in that series, there is " A Recent Rapprochement in Elysium " in which appear Mr. Gladstone, who looks sour, and Lord Beaconsfield, who looks bored. Underneath this (undated) drawing are the words: " For good or ill, at least we did do *something*."

A cartoon of peculiar interest to Oxford is " The

Encænia of 1908: being a humble hint to the Chancellor based on the Encænia of 1907, whereby so many idols of the market-place were cheerily set up in the groves of the Benign Mother." And the caricatures of the proposed D.C.L.'s include Little Tich, (then Messrs.) Conan Doyle and Hall Caine, Mr. R. J. Campbell, the Prince of Wales, Mr. Sandow, Sir Thomas Lipton, and Mr. G. R. Sims.

A surprisingly bad, conventional, and undiscerning caricature is one of Mr. George Robey, who is a much better subject for treatment than the artists who draw posters of him lead you to suspect. That Max should have followed the lines of those artists without any sign of individual interpretation at all is a cause for lamentation.

The nine pictures of the Edwardyssey, describing the adventures of Edwardysseus, are far better in idea than in realisation, with one exception, in which Carlos Cyclops detains Edwardysseus in his cave. The sheer wonder of this is the fact that although Max has given the Cyclops his one eye in the middle of his forehead, the drawing yet remains a supremely fine caricature of the late King of Portugal.

Max has done almost uncountable caricatures of King Edward, but the best in incident is the parody of the very well-known picture, "Your Majesty," by Miss Mary L. Gow, of Queen Victoria, receiving her ministers, on the death of King William, in her night-dress. King Edward VII. is "duly apprised of his accession" and is seen coming downstairs dressed in blue and pink striped pyjamas to receive the homage of Archbishop Temple

and Lord Halsbury. It is not a good drawing: it shows signs of haste. Once again, there is far too abject a dependence on a fine steel pen; and the light wash is too cold somehow to convey the right atmosphere.

Of political drawings, one made in 1914 of "President Wilson visiting Congress" is peculiarly notable in the light of after-events. The President appears as a delicate and refined (it is the only word) schoolmaster —a prig, one might say, but a gentle prig—regarding with passionless distaste the abysmal grossness of certain Congressmen, all of whose necks bulge dreadfully over their collars.

In single caricature Mr. Bonar Law looks worthy, Mr. Arnold Bennett, pleased with himself, and the late Mr. Alfred Lyttelton chuckles in an impish but sophisticated way at his own thoughts, the repression of open mirth being wonderfully suggested by the way in which the legs are twisted in and out of each other, with laocoonlike entanglements.

A series of imaginary Members of Parliament include "The Ordinary Radical," "The Old-Fashioned Tory," "The Labour Member," "The Old-Fashioned Liberal," "The Ordinary Tory," "The Welsh Member," "The Professional Member whose fame is outside the House," and "The Tory who has subscribed much to Party Funds." Yet one more injustice is recorded by the somewhat superficially Irish appearance of "The Irish Member." But you can see that "The Scotch Member" is red as well as dour, through the wash of watered Indian ink which is the only actual colour in the drawing. The best of this series is "One of the few Members

who care about the Indian Budget "—an old colonel with very wide trousers, drawn with genuine insight.

One of the best of Max's literary criticisms made through the medium of drawing is called " ' A Party in a Parlour, all Silent and all Damned,' and, as usual, Mr. Joseph Conrad intruding." Here are various sea-captains, all woe-begone, each in his individual way. Max seems to have introduced every known attitude that subtly suggests dejection. There is a depressed nigger, a sad parrot, and an old lady in a cap with a small tight bun of faded hair. Her profile not merely shows her misery, but proves it to be an irritating misery. The slightly frog-like mouth and eye, the pallor, make you feel that sadness is her occupation in life ; and you want to shake her. The lamp is smoking, on the table a skull lies on a green woolly mat beneath a glass dome, and two untidy and sluttish young women lean sulkily against chairs. Mr. Conrad, very spick and span, widely grinning, is coming in at the door.

This is a sound travesty and, left alone, is of abiding value, so long as the works of a very great master shall live. But Max has not left it alone : and, most admirable in itself as is the later caricature of Mr. Conrad, exhibited in 1921, it is an anti-climax. Here the novelist is seen gloating over a snake curling itself in and out of the interstices of a skull upon the seashore. " What a delightful coast," he is made to say. " One catches an illusion that one might forever be almost gay here."

It is, by the way, a rather better drawing than the " Party in a Parlour."

"Quis Custodiet Ipsum Custodem?"

Theodore Watts: "Mr. Caine, a word with you! Shields and I have been talking matters over, and we are agreed that this evening and henceforth you *must* not and *shall* not read any more of your literary efforts to our friend. They are too—what shall I say?—too luridly arresting, and are the allies of insomnia."

A Caricature by Max (1916).

But, as with the word "commonplace," so any small complaint about an anti-climax and other complaints that may be made are all governed by the fact that, from his earliest days, Max has taught us to hover beyond the strict limits of reason in our expectations of him.

Many of the drawings that were reproduced in *Fifty Caricatures*, with many others that have not been exhibited at all, are in the collection of Mr. Philip Guedalla, who was so kind, in the former case, to allow me to renew old friendships, and, in the latter, to make fresh acquaintances of the most enchanting sort.

VI

During the years 1916 and 1917 Max made a series of twenty-three caricatures of scenes in the life of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. These have not been exhibited.* "He has never done anything better" would, I imagine, be the unanimous verdict of the critics; and they would be perfectly right. In these caricatures Max's technique in actual drawing, in composition, and in the use of colour had been developed to that pitch of excellence which was seen in the exhibition of May, 1921.

Of the three drawings belonging to this series which are reproduced here, one, that of Swinburne and Mr. Gosse has already been referred to. The others represent "A momentary vision that once befell young Millais," and "Quis Custodiet Ipsum Custodem?" Young Millais is at work upon some Lorenzo or Giovanni, some conscientious work such as now conspicuously hangs (in the same room—but I may be wrong—as Mr. Maurice Greiffenhagen's "Idyll") at the Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool: and sees himself old, prosperous, P.R.A., with "Cherry Ripe" upon his knee. The idea behind this drawing is extremely witty; and, once more, the old allegiance

* Since this chapter was written, an exhibition of the series has been held at the Leicester Galleries.

to clothes is to be observed in the long lithe lines of arms and legs and the beautiful curves of the waistcoat.

" Quis Custodiet Ipsum Custodem ? " is, quite apart from its merits as caricature, the most decorative piece of work that Max has ever done. The walls, with Rossetti's pictures, the wallpaper, the carpet, and above all the screen are most exquisitely drawn, and the old golds, browns, and yellows with which they are tinted definitely appeal with great force to a side of our taste which had never been excited by Max before. Yet here again, oddly enough, he makes the mistake which so spoils a drawing referred to as in *Fifty Caricatures*. As with Colonel Seeley's nose, so here, the edge of the round looking-glass comes exactly to the edge of the screen : and so that part of the composition stares at you in the most awkward fashion. Unfold the delightful screen but an inch or two more and it would have " broken " the rim of the glass, and your eye would be duly gratified. You may say, perhaps, that it is wrong to criticise a caricaturist on such grounds as these ; but Max's technical excellence in the drawing of that picture calls for such criticism.

Then, belonging to this series, there is Gabriel Rossetti begging his sister Christina to buy some of those " stunning " fabrics from " that new shop in Regent Street," which are laid out in all their alluring tints upon a table in the background—to which Christina replies : " Well, Gabriel, I don't know. I'm sure you yourself always dress very simply."

And you see him there with his untidy garments hanging about him in ungainly folds.

"A man from Hymethus" represents Leighton trying to persuade Rossetti to have his name put down in the Candidates' book of the R.A. In this only the legs of Rossetti at the end of a sofa are seen, with his slippers dangling and one heel showing through a large hole in his sock.

In "Woolner at Farringford, 1857" Mrs. Tennyson is saying to Woolner "When (I'm only asking) *when* do you begin modelling his halo?" Here is a beautiful, clean-shaven Tennyson, which with other drawings, notably that of Rossetti as a small boy lying on the floor and scribbling, shows Max in a new light, reconstructing the past, no doubt with the help of portraits, daguerreotypes, and photographs, but in his individual way and with a result that is highly convincing. These caricatures of young people whose faces in middle life or old age it is which are familiar to us remind one of a group that Max exhibited some years ago called: "In case I am not spared to see them"—where he predicts the aged appearance of a number of men known to us then in their prime.

In the "Rossetti" series there is, too, Coventry Patmore preaching to the painter-poet "on" a teapot, and explaining that it is "not worshipful for its form and colour but rather as one of the sublime symbols of domesticity": while in another drawing Mr. Morley introduces to Rossetti John Stuart Mill—a delightful old man (evidently) of distinguished dignity and kindliness.

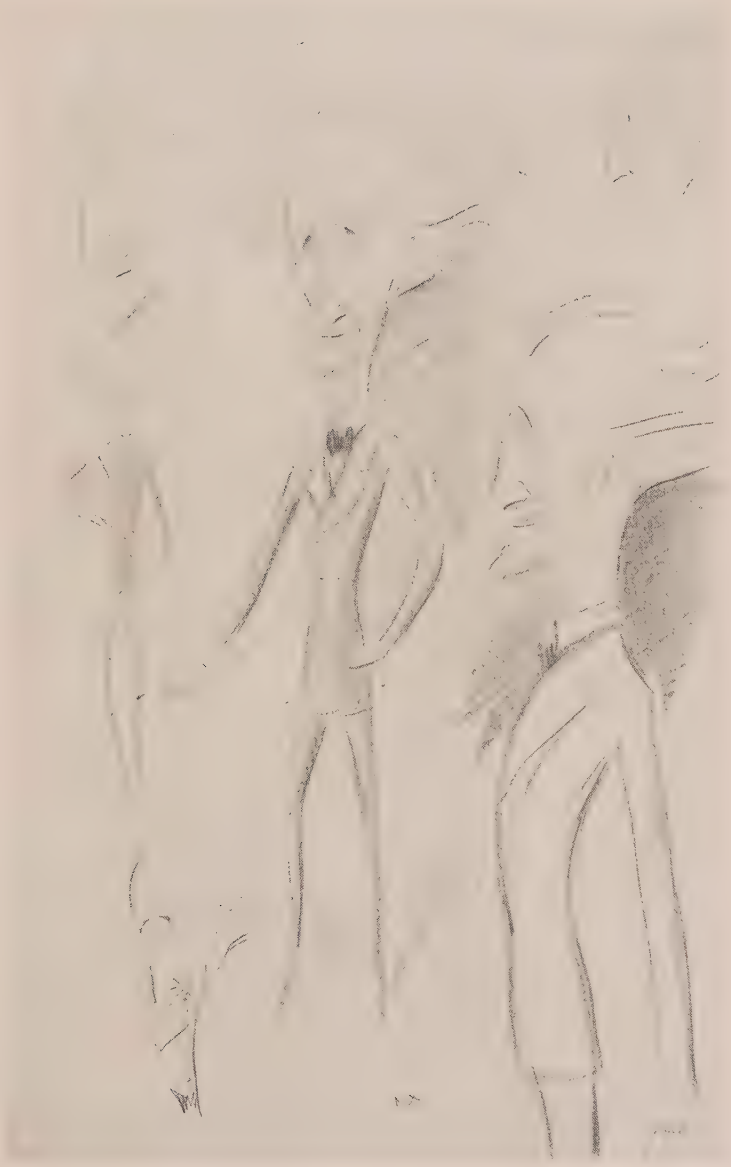
" The name of Rossetti is heard for the first time in the Western States of America, 1882," in a lecture by Oscar Wilde, dressed in puce-coloured velvet. The audience consists of greatly bewildered old farmers and cowboys who listen with open mouths. In " Blue China " we have Whistler and Carlyle and a large Nankin vase. The caricature of Whistler suggests to us that the art of making enemies, though gentle, was quite easy. With arms outstretched in eagerness for the fresh air George Meredith exhorts Rossetti to come for a walk. This brings from forgetfulness the fact that Max made Meredith the subject of his only caricature in *Vanity Fair*. That was a beautiful drawing, with a bird-like innocence, but also a bird-like curiosity in the uplifted eyes, with the finger of one hand delicately pointing, while the other droops upon a stick.

Once again in this series Max returns to Swinburne, who, with his flaming aureole of hair, is seen, during the small hours " reading *Anactoria* to Gabriel and William, at 16 Cheyne Walk, in the 'sixties."

Quite apart from the technical merits of this series it is a profound study of the period, the result of the most enthusiastic research, the " finishing course " for any neophyte desiring initiation into the mysteries of Pre-Raphaelitism. But here for the first time in bulk, though single instances were to be observed in *Fifty Caricatures*, Max has shown a tendency which has been so deeply deplored by critics in regard to his last exhibition : a tendency, that is, to make portraits rather than caricatures. True, the portraits have in

them all manner of subtleties, quiet appreciations, recondite disparagements, as indeed have serious portraits by accomplished artists. But that, speaking with humility combined with confidence, is not Max's art.

This tendency is probably common to every one with an inborn talent for caricature, who has never "learned" to draw, but to whom constant practice in ordinary representative drawing (which the caricaturist would do much better to leave alone) brings, as time goes by, great "improvement." Mr. Leslie Ward, "Spy" of *Vanity Fair*, is a particularly good (or bad) instance of what I am driving at. His early work, strongly influenced as it was by his predecessor, "Ape," was excellent caricature—though no doubt he was always a more accomplished draughtsman and painter in the normal sense than Max. He probably knew, that is, a great deal more about modelling, *chiaroscuro*, and so on. But as the years went on "Spy" got further and further away from caricature, until at last his *Vanity Fair* cartoons became quite simple portraits.



Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham.
Studies for a Caricature by Max (1921).

VII

The exhibition of May, 1921, at the Leicester Galleries, showed not only an inclination to reject caricature in its more exaggerated, and true, sense, but also (to get over the worst at the beginning) displays the fact that however splendid an isolation abroad may be from a personal point of view, it has a deleterious effect upon one who seeks to go on making caricatures of people he has not seen for a long time. Mr. Lloyd George, for example, though caricatures of him by Max were never very successful, remains almost the same (and he is not) as when he is seen between his "Guardians," Mr. Masterman and Mr. Rufus Isaacs, in the exhibition of 1913 and in *Fifty Caricatures*. Once again, Max is not overwhelmingly interested in politicians, and he has seldom put his heart into them, never indeed unless there is in them something outside politics. That is not to depreciate his observations about Mr. Lloyd George and others, which are infinitely better and more true than the actual drawings. In "Woodrow Wilson's Peace . . . 1920," you see the American President, an invalid, utterly weary, drawn almost as a ghost is drawn, and Mr. Lloyd George saying to M. Clemenceau, with a nudge, "Thought he was going to get the better of you and I"; and it is

only people who have not begun to understand what caricature means, who have pointed out that the Prime Minister's English is, in life, quite accurate.

Max's real attitude to politics is probably implicit in the caricature called " Post Taedia Longa Laborum " where M. Paderewski says : " Ah, read me one of the poems of your youth ! " to Signor D'Annunzio, who replies : " Ah, play me one of your adorable sonatas ! "

The best caricature in the exhibition was that of the King of Spain done in 1914, which, greatly exaggerated, is superbly like the subject, and a " spiritual caricature," one guesses, of the highest quality. Also done in 1914, but not seen till the exhibition in question was Sir Claude Phillips " going on," which is very admirable indeed. The oriental inscrutability of Sir Philip Sassoon, sitting cross-legged in the House of Commons, is beautifully rendered, just as is the blandness of Mr. Filson Young. Both of these were done in 1913.

Another drawing made at some time before the war, which, with the others (Max Beerbohm wrote in an introductory Note to the Catalogue), " may have an old-world charm," is of Sir Oliver Lodge who says to himself : " Strange, that a man who *looks* so very credulous "—— of Sir E. Ray Lankester, who in turn observes : " Odd that with such a brow "——

But Mr. Lytton Strachey, " trying " (—and contriving—as Max adds in a postscript) " to see her with Lord Melbourne's eyes " is, I am informed, almost a portrait, and may be taken as a fair specimen of Max's later work.

" H.R.H. " is a caricature of the Prince of Wales, bored and weary beyond the consolation of tears by his travels, and is accompanied by an explanation. " A pathetic attempt on my part at a cartoon that shall be acceptable by some organ of the comic press."

Apart from caricatures and cartoons in this exhibition, he gave eighteen examples of a new accomplishment—" Doubles " or " Smudges " made by folding a sheet of paper upon a blotch of colour, or various colours, and subsequently working up the form suggested by the result. This is, of course, an old game—at all events with ink : but Max has carried it to a point (reached, he admits, by " a little cheating ") far in advance of anything of that kind seen before. These doubles are all interesting, some of them genuinely beautiful.

In his general comments on the world at large Max keeps the balance true. " A Translethean Soliloquy " shows " a damsel of the ' keepsake ' time, observing a modern young woman and saying : ' I do wonder what the young gentlemen saw in *me!* ' " On the other hand, an eminent soldier, at the present day, to whom an eminent scientist has explained a new explosive, says : " Well, it's perfectly marvellous. But—gad !—how it makes one wish one was a youngster and *sure* of being in the Next Great War." This, bitter as it is, is a perfectly fair and widely deserved criticism. That is one kind of soldier. Another is represented by the " Colonel " in the caricature of " Private Rothenstein," which will be found in this book. The drawing was done in 1916 or 1917 and has not been exhibited. It is explained by the title " If the Age-

Limit is Raised to Forty-Five." The words (printed here beneath the illustration) which the private is made to say refer, with some delicacy, to the conscientiousness of the professor—of whom it is a masterly caricature. But the Colonel, not an individual, is, though not a caricature, a most brilliant invention. Do we not all know him, and (some of us, still) honour him? His high breeding, his kindliness, and his strength are all as manifest as the obstinacy denoted by the extraordinarily clever straight line which runs from his cap to his shoulder, and perhaps a little stupidity combined with much " native " shrewdness, There is nothing sophisticated about the Colonel. But there is also in him none of the senseless brutality of the man who wanted to be in the Next Great War. And probably he knows a bit more than his job, is good, and clean, and a rather low-churchman, is fond of children, has a little land, knows all the difference between curry and what English cooks call curry, and has an intensely quiet voice which maddens with fury the " younger intellectuals " by whom he does not in the least mind being derided and misunderstood.

We come now to that kind of satire which complements certain of the essays in *And Even Now*. One of these is amusing—" Tout peut se rétablir—Urgent Conclave of Doctrinaire Socialists to decide on some means of inducing the Lower Orders to regard them once more as Visionaries merely." Some of the

Socialists are portraits, as in the case of Mr. Cunninghame Graham, and some caricatures, as Mr. Sidney Webb. But the whole drawing is beautiful. From a caricaturish point of view, the studies of Mr. Cunninghame Graham in this book are better than the finished drawing, and provide in that respect a parallel with the caricature of Charles Conder. Each of these studies is extraordinarily like the subject, who—himself a dandy in more senses of the word than one—in the nature of things appeals very strongly, as a subject, to Max.

We now come to the more definite emblems of Max's outlook upon the world to-day.

"St. James's Street a Few Years Ago" shows us "The Marquess of Pantagruel believing (quite rightly) that the sight of him cheers and pleases the populace": and "St. James's Street To-day," where a shabbier Marquess believes "(rightly or wrongly) that the sight of him embitters the populace."

(One has a feeling almost of indelicacy in referring to the next couple of cartoons, but for the purposes of this book, it has to be done.) "Author, Publisher, and Printer in the dear old recent recent time" describes the first as only comparatively indigent, the second fat and prosperous, handing a parcel of manuscript with a pompous air to a deferential printer. "Author, Publisher, and Printer, at the present time" are given as a beautifully-drawn skeleton cringing to an all-but-skeleton cringing to a very prosperous and condescending Person indeed.

Then "'When Labour Rules,' or, what M. Cambon frightfully foresees, and why M. Cambon is leaving us"

(December, 1920) illustrates a meeting between the French Ambassador and the (Labour) Secretary for Foreign Affairs (holding his first weekly reception).

" Glad to see you, Moossoo ! You'll find I'm pretty well up in all the main points already. Capital o' France : Paris, pronounced Paree. Republican form o' Government, founded 1792. Principal exports : wines, silks and woollen goods. Battle o' Waterloo, 1814. The Great War, 1914 to 1918. Take a chair."

That is obviously a just criticism. In making the Foreign Secretary refer to Waterloo (he would not, by the way, give the wrong date—trust the State School for that) Max illustrates exactly the form of tactlessness to be expected of men whose first dealings with foreigners will be guided by good intentions rather than by experience, and—shall I not add ?—" hereditary *savoir faire.*"

Another " Labour " cartoon which has annoyed not only people with political " Labour " proclivities is called " The Patron—*a drawing dedicated (with all possible sympathy and good-will, heaven knows !) to those of our young poets who, not knowing very much—why* SHOULD *they know very much ?—about politics and the deplorable part which human nature plays in politics, imagine that under the domination of* LABOUR *the liberal arts might have quite a decent chance.*" Here a poet stands before the Minister of Education, who exclaims : " Wot ! You'll dedicate your mon-you-mental translation of Pett Rark's sonnits to me if I'll get you outdoor relief for six months ? Oh, really ? And you say *you're* one o' the Workers yourself ? Worker ?

Blackmailer—that's what *you* are! . . . *Out*side!" [Exit Poet, inwardly composing (*mutatis mutandis*) some such letter as was written by Samuel Johnson to the fourth Earl of Chesterfield.]

Mr. Charles Marriott, writing in *The Outlook* about this drawing, to take one instance, said: "Is it Labour or is it Art that Max is wrong about? To put it bluntly, why should we assume that art and letters will fare worse under the plumber than under the grocer? It is quite likely that some of us who write and paint would fail to move the plumber; but, as man to man, do art and letters end with us? Since it appears incredible that Max can be wrong about art and letters, I can only conclude that, with diabolical subtlety, he has drawn not his own idea of Labour, but the idea of the plumber as held by the grocer."

Before discussing that point, which has a very important bearing upon Max Beerbohm's work as a whole and which must therefore be left till the end, let us consider a drawing called "Blame the Cloth. A Captain of Industry declaring that the desire of the manual workers to be paid exorbitant wages for doing the least possible amount of work is a sure sign that they have lost their faith in a future life."

Like so much of Max's satire there is much more than a grain of truth in that reflection. I have personally heard several people, though not captains of industry, express the same idea. Whatever one's own political sympathies (if any) may be a gross brute in a black coat and a linen collar looks much nastier than a gross brute in corduroys and cap o' liberty: and

nothing could be more repulsive than Max's Captain of Industry. But the critics of his "Labour" cartoons neglect that one when they want to find his weight on the other side of the balance, and leap for joy because in ". . . Giving Place to the New," he has satirised Lord Lansdowne, who says (to Mr. Gordon Selfidge): "Statuary, Sir? Majolica, paintings in oil, all the latest Eighteenth Century books—*this* way." This really pleased the critics of professed "Labour" sympathies, who seemed to recognise in it the old argument, honoured only by time, that it is the hereditary landlord who grinds the faces of the poor. The "poor," by this time, let us hope, know rather better.

Anyhow, as will be gathered from the description of these drawings Max has satirised the social outlook from all three points—Aristocracy, Labour, and Business. So, though it doesn't much matter, none of them need complain. And Max himself is perfectly right, because he recognises that all stories have two sides to them, and no truth is absolute.

And, last of all, we come to the three drawings which correspond to that hint of wistfulness discoverable in *And Even Now*.

"The Future, as beheld by the (personified) Eighteenth Century" is merely a replica of his elegant self. "The Future, as beheld by the Nineteenth Century" is a somewhat more prosperous edition of his comfortable self. But "The Future, as beheld by the Twentieth Century," who has lost an arm and is pallid and worn is the vague wraith of a question mark.

This series is very beautifully drawn and from that standpoint is entirely meritorious—but that, of course, being what we are, is not the standpoint from which, first as well as last, we regard it.

"He can't draw" is one of the stupider forms of criticism that used to be and still is, here and there in remote corners, made about Max.* I don't know if any one ever asked him to draw, but it hasn't needed Mr. Roger Fry and the "modern" school of art critics to tell us that the observation is purely irrelevant. There is a type of mind utterly unable to grasp the notion that though a drawing may be quite anatomically wrong, and not in the least "like a man" it may yet be well worth doing—and admiring—because it is so like, or so vigorous a comment upon—say—Lord Palmerston. You try and explain the thing to the people I am thinking of, and they say: "Ah—a grotesque—a caricature!" and dismiss it with scorn. It does not come within the schoolmaster's definition of "drawing," and, therefore, it is rubbish, nonsense, child's play. That strictly "correct" work may be utterly lifeless troubles such folk not at all, nor are they in the least interested to know that freedom and beauty of line redeems much inaccuracy in representation and that even the symbols and conventions by which a caricaturist dodges his own limitations are often, besides being clever and amusing, indicative of greater resource, and higher artistic sensibility than that required to make all feet, hands, eyes, ears,

* Or, as an old lady recently said: "Mr. McBeerbohm's pictures are so *unnatural*."

shadows and perspective realistic. People without the smallest feeling for symmetry or form or beauty of any kind, provided they have muscular control of a pencil, can, given eyesight and perseverance, be " taught perspective " and the rest of it, but they will call forth no answering appreciation such as is given to the good caricaturist who " can't draw."

This, by the way, is no plea for anarchy, but rather an invitation to schoolmasters and some others to exercise a sense of proportion and to allow themselves to discriminate between dead and empty forms and vital, if apocryphal, images.

Whether we are to be glad or sorry that to a much greater extent now than formerly Max *can* draw, we cannot say until we know whither that technical power is going to lead him. Personally, I do not believe that Max can go on for very long without surprising us. He is pretty sure to have something up his tight sleeve. He will, in some totally unexpected manner, turn his technical progress to good account.

A POSTSCRIPT

A POSTSCRIPT

We have now come to the extreme foreground, with the Writings of Mr. Beerbohm upon the left hand, and the Caricatures of Max upon the right. And we look down the vista between to that vanishing point behind the beginning, and bring our eyes back again, to and fro, to find out if we can see the whole picture at once—Max Beerbohm in perspective.

To return to the apple-tree analogy we have discovered that so far as the Writings are concerned the trees, which began, as they will, by putting forth blossom only, now—here in the foreground—are seen to bear both fruit and blossom together, at the same time. So much for the left-hand side. On the right, our eyes first take in the foreground and then hurry away down the avenue, not in disappointment but because the foreground on the right seems just a little vague. It is not quite finished yet. The tree upon the left is quite definite and clear. There will be other trees like it, worse or better as the case may be, but we can at least be fairly sure that they will go on bearing blossom and fruit together. On the right, far away down the avenue the trees were already bearing fruit, with and without blossom. As we come towards the foreground—is it possible that it was just a " bad

year" ?—we see more blossom than fruit: and the fruit that we do see strikes us as belonging rather to that variety which is proper to the left side. Is that it? Oh, but we remember that there *is* no variety in question. It is the same sort of apple, only planted in a different position.

Still, we cannot yet make up our minds about the caricatures. As I have said, Max almost certainly has something up his sleeve: and the kind of work that he is doing now is greatly to be enjoyed for appropriate reasons. But—the bulk of it is not caricature. The slight tinge of seriousness which is so gracious in one medium, and which will so please the people who complained of Max Beerbohm's early lack of it no doubt pleases them also in regard to his drawings, but there at present it tends to obliterate his most signal virtue. What he is doing is done by him better than by any one else. But pure caricature, as Max can do it, is by any one else utterly unapproachable. Of another caricaturist who could have drawn "The King of Spain," or the "Mr. Charles Conder" in this book, I would say as Max Beerbohm would say the critics would say Betsy Prig would say—"There ain't no sich a person."

Max is Somebody or Nobody merely as you regard Art. He stands or falls by that. There are still people who talk of all art as a "lot of nonsense." Indeed, I once heard an extremely successful man of Business say, quite seriously, after carefully weighing certain pro's and con's, to a well-known writer, whose success was one purely of esteem: "Frankly,

MAX BEERBOHM.
A Caricature by Bohun Lynch.

old man, I consider what you're doing is sheer waste of time."

So it was, from the Business point of view, because there was "no money in it." And Time, as we know, is Money. Art is despised by these good and worthy people, some of whom yet patronize Art because it is the correct thing to do. But if Art is in any way to be desired, then Max Beerbohm is justified whether as a satirist in general, or, particularly, an essayist, a teller of stories, and a caricaturist. His work is for civilized people who appreciate fine shades of meaning, who are trained to recognise a light touch. His art is, therefore, very "undemocratic." And why should it be otherwise? Must all art be for everybody, of whatever order of intelligence? Are we to have a maximum standard of wisdom to complement the minimum wage? It seems somehow unreasonable. Further, it is impossible.

All art is useless and Max is "useless." He is a child of civilization. You may bite your thumb at civilization, and all the possessions it has given to you—the Jacobean chairs, the Battersea enamel, the old silver, the pictures, the sculpture, the books, the music that makes you glad, and the wine that prepares you for the music. All these are the fruits of civilization, "extras" really. You may say (I often do) that the happy man is he whose possessions will all go into his breeches' pockets, who can stand before the world as he will, in due course, stand before his God, without useless "lumber," and all that "lumber" comprehends. But that is only making a virtue of what you fear may

one day be a necessity—the least durable material for virtue. Admitted that you would be happy as a strolling player, an itinerant photographer, or a casual labourer, you—being what you are—would still want private possessions ; and if you now sold all your goods, if you made up your mind to do without accessories, to be content with promenade concerts and with pictures in the public galleries, you would still find the public libraries most unsatisfying for your reading. (For one thing they won't let you smoke there.) You would still need to possess books, and if you set out on a journey across the world you would find that you would soon be encumbered once more by a good many books.

Max Beerbohm's gifts are small and only to be enjoyed fully by a small proportion of the " reading public." You say that true civilization would give him a large " reading public." I reply that you are probably right. Only we have not got a true civilization.

Again to return to our earnest-minded friends, spiritual descendants of the Puritans—for them Max may be used as a test case. He is the personification of the civilized world as we know it. He writes for people who have read books and have seen pictures, not as a duty, not on a deliberate educational plan (which is not the way to read books or to see pictures), but out of pure curiosity, really educated people, in fact, and (I abhor the word, but) cultured people. In a rough, uncultivated world such as we should see were our civilization to go, where the fight was only to the

strongest and the least scrupulous of their strength, and men were more urgently concerned even than they are for bread, there would be no use for Max Beerbohm. And so long as there is a major population of Mr. Charles Marriott's Plumbers, whose chief business in life is still the getting of bread, the majority will not require the works of Mr. Beerbohm. He is a luxury, an extra. All art is that. And we mean by civilization that condition of life which enables us to think of other things than getting bread, and to enjoy things without material use. We do not mean riches—heaven forbid!—but a little quiet leisure now and again. Of course, if civilization follows the ideal direction we shall one day have a population of plumbers all of whom, not merely have time and energy to give to extras, but who will, so to speak, have learned the art of discrimination in respect of extras; who might prefer, for instance, the essays of Max Beerbohm to The Pictures. But would Max Beerbohm flourish in such a civilization? Were he to be surrounded by a world of plumbers, all clamouring in their thousands for his latest book, would his works thrive? I think not. In order to be a real idolater of Max Beerbohm you must, I fancy, be lacking in a sense of proportion. You must care very greatly for the little things that only civilization as we know it can give us. "How pleasant," he writes in *And Even Now*, "if we had lived our lives in the nineteenth century and no other, with the ground all firm under our feet!"

So you see a man who is accustomed to the Old Order and who does not want to suffer for those guilty

of making the Old Order impossible. The guilty people are the takers, the materialists, who—in the name of God—despise all extras, all unproductive effort, all sacrifice, all giving. They are Mr. Marriott's Grocers. So we come rather dangerously near to the discovery that the interest in Max Beerbohm's work is ephemeral, depending on the superimposition of one class over another? But it is not ephemeral, because it deals with character, which is quite a stable ingredient in the composition of man, and will continue to be infinitely variable so long as mankind exists.

Of course, if our civilization goes, that is all about it. There will be nothing for Max Beerbohm to do, because he will have no audience; nobody, that is, with time to spare from getting bread. There will go abegging, indeed, every one whose brains cannot be dragooned for practical and, for the most part, selfish ends. People who "give" will not be required. Nobody will be required. The world will be in the hands of those who force it to accept them—a delectable prospect.

In the meantime civilization, for the moment, goes on: and we have to decide whether the Plumber or the Grocer will be the best for Art. The point is that we do at least know where we are with the grocer: we know what he is capable of from his damnedest upwards. About the plumber we have misgivings. In order to decide which novelists might go on writing and which become clerks in chemical manure factories, the plumber might feel disposed to ballot. There is no end to the things he might do and about which we

cannot guess. Whereas, the grocer feels that, so far as art goes, he must subscribe the opinions of his betters —at all events in public : hence a steady improvement as time goes by in the posters which advertise his goods.

We do not know if grocery will persist. Perhaps, as Mr. Chesterton said, " his time, just like his weight, is short." But which ever side rules (since the Old Order seems to have gone beyond recall)—Labour, or Business and Trade—let it be that which is most ready to make sacrifices and to see the point of sacrifices, of extras, of " useless " ornament. That side will be best for Art. But we do not yet know which side is most inclined that way, and none of us living now need, in our lifetime, expect to know.

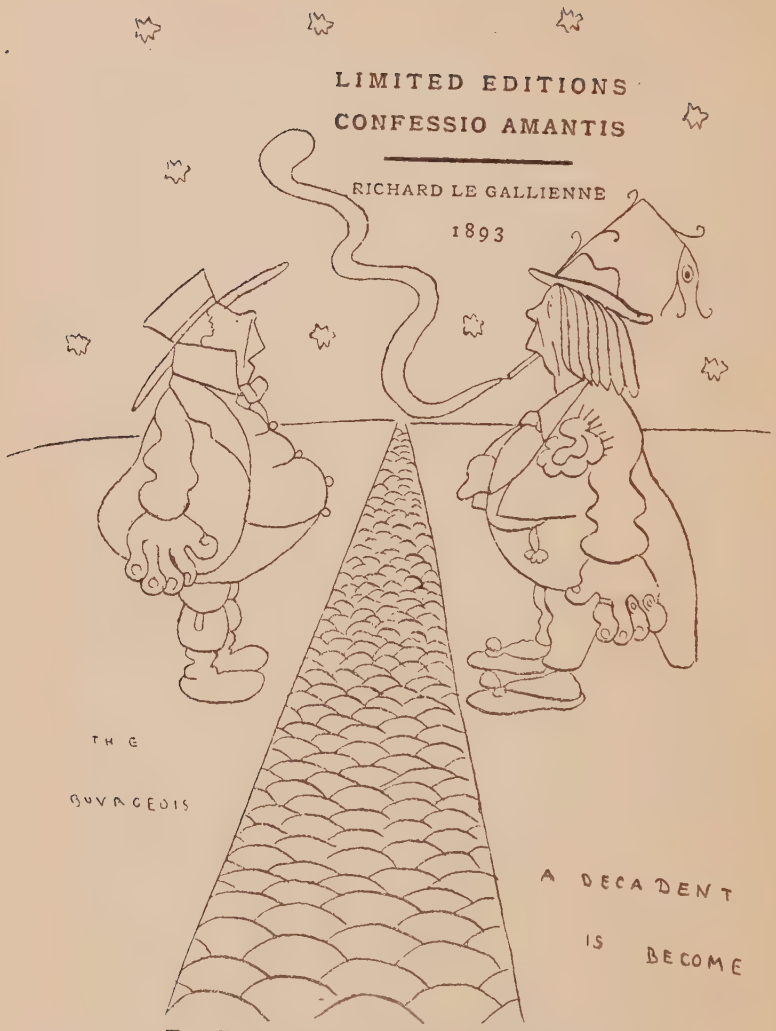
" A ' sex war,' we are often told," Max Beerbohm tells us again in *And Even Now*, " is to be one of the features of the world's future. . . . It seems likely enough. One can believe anything of the world's future." That is desperate : that is not making the best of things : it is depressing. Still, even those the greater portion of whose lives have been spent in the twentieth and not in the security of the nineteenth century have tasted a little of the better kind of civilization and have read certain books and seen certain drawings : and that is something.

And when we pause and wonder what sort of man it is that these books and drawings reveal, as we do when books and drawings have given us very great pleasure indeed, we find—a profound dandy, who obviously loves comfort, a settled and ordered and unad-

venturous life, very pleased with small and simple pleasures, but very curious, eager to see how some wheels go round, but not all wheels : probably with little ambition, in no wise greedy, a mischievous child, fond of animals, fond of the oddest kind of people (and rather proud of that fondness)—a child again, a wise child—wise enough to live in a place where civilization is the servant of man and not his task-master, a place where peace reigns with beauty, where he lives in just that retirement that he predicted for himself five and twenty years ago. And there, in a country where little " English " flowers mock the English tourist from beneath trees richly loaded with green and yellow lemons, he is girt about with leisure and tranquillity.

One includes amongst artists those who, apart from other accomplishments, understand and practise the Art of Life, and " it is as an artist," Max Beerbohm wrote of Brummell once, " and for his supremacy in the art of costume . . . and for that superb taste and subtle simplicity of mode . . . that I do most deeply revere him."

May the present writer, diffidently inclined to tamper with another man's work, eliminate the quotation marks, and suppress the Brummell ?



"The Bourgeois a Decadent is Become."
A Drawing by Max (1893).

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne.
A Caricature by Max (1893).

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne and Mr. John Lane.
A Caricature by Max (1893).

THE MINOR POET AND HIS MUSE.
A Drawing by Max (1893).

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne.
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3. Henry Labouchere.
4. A. W. Pinero.
5. H.R.H. The Prince of Wales.
6. Richard le Gallienne.
7. A. J. Balfour.
8. Frank Harris.
9. Lord William Nevill.
10. Rudyard Kipling.
11. Sir William Harcourt.

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16. George Alexander.
17. The Marquis of Queensberry.
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23. The Marquis of Granby.
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3. Goethe.
4. Matthew Arnold.
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11. Paul Verlaine.
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14. Mr. W. B. Yeats.
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3. Mr. Henry Chaplin.
4. Mr. W. J. Locke.
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